The Confessions of an Elderly Lady

Marguerite, Countess of Blessington

ALEKTRYAINA

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E. T. Parris *H. Cook*

Lady Arabella Walsingham

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Marguerite, Countess of Blessington

with eight illustrations by E. T. Parris

edited by Ross G. Arthur

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Introduction

During her lifetime, Marguerite Gardiner, Countess of Blessington, was widely known as a versatile, successful and prolific novelist, a charming and witty hostess, and one of the most engaging women of the age. Her literary output includes broad satirical portrayals of characters from all walks of society, searing social and political commentary, searching psychological examinations of a whole range of self-absorbed men and women,—and stray epigrams, occasional articles, and memoirs. She wrote single-volume novels and three-deckers; first-person narratives, third-person narratives, short stories, lyric poems, a "long poem" and an epistolary novel. Her literary successes would have seemed, at her death in 1849, to assure a permanent place in the canon of English literature.

That her works are not better known today is in large measure a result of excessive interest in the details of her life. She began life in Ireland as the daughter of a rather disreputable man who married her off for profit; her first husband died in a drunken brawl; her second husband, the Earl of Blessington, was one of the richest men in England; she knew Byron, and wrote about him; from Blessington's death in 1829 until her own, she maintained a relationship of an uncertain nature with Alfred Count d'Orsay, one of the most prominent dandies of the age and the estranged husband of the Countess's stepdaughter; she died bankrupt.

One might hesitate to hold up England in the period as an era of balance and toleration in such areas; but the near unanimity of writing about the Countess since her death does make one long for the greater variety, at least, of attitudes expressed in the newspapers, journals, and memoirs of that age. Reviews of her novels and anecdotes about her life from the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s are not, of course, uniformly positive, but they do display an interest in her *work*; today, too many of her supporters treat her as an appendage to Byron, or speak of her as a victim of patriarchy; too many of her detractors revel in the scurrilous speculations which in the past would have been found only in the gutter press. Of proper literary criticism there is precious little; it is in the hope that such may be encouraged that this publication of *The Confessions of an Elderly Lady* has been undertaken.

Experienced readers of early nineteenth-century texts will not be surprised to find rather more commas in the Countess's texts than would be allowed in modern prose, and unusual terms or unusual spellings of commoner words—"sha'n't," "courtesied" where we would expect "curtsied," "gaity" for "gaiety," "sunk" and "shrunk" where "sank" and "shrank" would now be used—or words which require different syntax —a person may whisper another rather than whisper to another, or be expelled college rather than expelled from college, and may partake *tout court* rather than partake in or partake of. Such things may be found, of course, in Scott, Dickens, and Austen, although it must be admitted that the Countess is rather less attentive than many of her contemporaries to the newly imposed rules of grammar which forbade dangling modifiers and would have replaced many of her "whos" with "whoms" and vice versa. "Correcting" her language—including her archaic French and flawed Latin—would not only falsify history; it would also diminish the effect of her heroine's *voice* which the Countess constructed so vividly.

The novel was well received, and widely reviewed when it appeared, as was its French translation. Some critics were a little troubled by its episodic nature, but most recognized it as a subtle examination of the psychology of an intelligent and intriguing but profoundly egocentric woman in the rarefied world of aristocratic England.

The text presented here follows the first edition, published by Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans in London in 1838. In the first edition the portrait of Lucinda Harcourt is mistakenly labeled "Lady Lucinda Fitzeustace"; here it is corrected.

A Chronology of the Major Writings of the Countess of Blessington

Journal of a Tour through the Netherlands to Paris in 1821 (1822)
Sketches and Fragments (1822)
The Magic Lantern (1822)
Rambles in Waltham Forest (1827)
Journal of Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington (1832)
Grace Cassidy, or the Repealers (1833)
The Two Friends (1835)
Confessions of an Elderly Gentleman (1836)
Flowers of Loveliness (1836)
Gems of Beauty (1836)
The Victims of Society (1837)
Confessions of an Elderly Lady (1838)
Desultory Thoughts and Reflections (1839)
The Governess (1839)
The Idler in Italy (1839)
The Belle of a Season (1840)
The Idler in France (1841)
The Lottery of Life (1842)
Meredith (1843)
Strathern: or, Life at Home and Abroad (1845)
The Memoirs of a Femme de Chambre (1846)
Marmaduke Herbert; or the Fatal Error (1847)
Country Quarters (1850)

The Confessions of an Elderly Lady

How interminably long the days are! Though broken by repasts, visits, airings, and reading, still they creep on with leaden feet. Heigh-ho! It was not thus in the days of my youth. Then the hours seemed to have wings, and flew away so rapidly, that I often wished to retard their flight. But every thing is changed! The very seasons are no longer the same; and their productions bear no more comparison with those that I remember, than—what shall I say?—than the young persons, misnamed beauties, in these degenerate days, do, with the lovely women who were my contemporaries. Yes, the flowers have lost their fragrance, the fruit its flavour, and the vegetables taste as if created by some chemical process. The newspapers, too, partake the general change; and are, for the most part, filled with the movements of stupid lords and silly ladies; or the speeches of some demagogue placarded into notice, by the praise of one party and abuse of another. Parliamentary debates, instead of displaying the magniloquent march of sonorous words that were wont to charm my youthful ears, rendering each speech worthy of a place in that excellent work, entitled "Enfield's Speaker," are now reduced to colloquies, quite as familiar as if the debaters were seated round their tables after dinner, and had only their convivial guests, and not the nation, as audience. To be sure, people did assert that Dr. Johnson wrote the reported speeches, but so much the better, say I; for they will stand as honorable records of the abilities of my contemporaries, when the world no longer remembers the rumour of their Johnsonian parentage, and will form an admirable contrast to the inflated common places, or flimsy theories of the present time.

I have but one consolation for the degeneracy of the age, and that consists in the conviction that few records of it will descend to posterity. People seem to lose all respect for the past; events succeed each other

with such velocity that the most remarkable one of a few years gone by, is no more remembered than if centuries had closed over it. The present race seem to think only of the actual minute. They are prodigals, who give no thought to their predecessors, and no care to their successors. People were not thus heartless in my youthful days—but every thing is changed!

The magazines, too, how they are fallen off! No longer do two interesting looking heads, ycleped "A *tête-à-tête,*" or "The fair deceiver, and the enamoured Philander," meet the gaze, initiating one into some recent *morceau* of amusing scandal. No—the portrait of some would-be beauty, or modern author, stares one in the face, endeavouring to look handsome, or clever, with all her, or his, might; but as it is not often that artists succeed in bestowing either of these expressions on their subjects, they are frequently, as unkindly treated by art, as by nature.

Then the matter of these magazines—how infinitely inferior are they to those of my youth! Pretentious philosophical disquisitions on recent discoveries in science—sketchy tales, with shadowy personages—crude reviews on as crude literary productions—poems guiltless of thought—and a *réchauffée* of the events of the past month, as insipid as *réchauffées* generally are.

The editors of the ephemeral productions to which I allude, ambitious to contain in their pages some attractive article, and knowing the craving appetites of their readers for personalities, dress up a forgotten anecdote, or obsolete scandal, with the *sauce piquant* of innuendoes and exaggerations; or else with tales professing to treat of fashionable life, with characters that bear no more resemblance to living ones, than do the figures on which milliners and tailors display their garments for sale. But their conclusions satisfy the crowd, who, unable to penetrate the sanctuaries of aristocratic life, cannot judge of the coarseness and want of truth of the pretended representations.

The study of history, I carefully eschew—for modern historians are all would-be-philosophers; who, instead of relating facts as they occurred, give us their version, or rather perversions of them, always coloured by their political prejudices, or distorted to establish some theory, and rendered obscure by cumbrous attempts to trace effect from cause. They tell us not only what potentates, heroes, and statesmen said, or are imagined to have said, but also, not unfrequently, favour us with what

they thought; though they do not quite satisfy us as to the authenticity of the sources whence they derived their information. Poetry I have been compelled to abandon, ever since Byron demoralized the public taste, by substituting passion for sentiment; and originated a herd of servile imitators of all his defects, but who possess not one ray of the genius that redeemed them.

Dryden, Waller, Pope, were the poets read in my youth. Their lofty thoughts came to us in as lofty diction, like the beauties of that day, attired in their court dresses. Novels were then an agreeable resource. Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa Harlowe—how often have I dwelt on your pages, my sympathy excited, and my reason satisfied. Yes—Richardson's heroines were not only women, but, with the exception of Pamela, they were gentlewomen, a class that seems now to have passed away from our modern novels, as wholly as they have from society: a genus ycleped "ladies" being substituted, which no more resembles their dignified progenitors, than the flimsy draperies of the modern originals of these meretricious shadows, do the substantial velvets and brocades in which my stately contemporaries were attired.

Times are indeed sadly changed! Fashion, a nondescript which, like Milton's allegorical personification of death, has no definite shape, has now usurped the place of decorum; and, like death levels all distinctions. This same fashion is a monstrous growth of these degenerate days, which, like the idol of Juggernaut, often crushes those who prostrate themselves before her revolving wheel. It is the sworn foe to all that is good and respectable; and encourages only the parvenus which spring up beneath its unwholesome shade, as does the fungus beneath that of some tree, whose deleterious moisture gives it birth.

Well *I*, at least, have not bowed down and worshipped this colossal idol. I have not left the residence of my ancestors, because fashion had proscribed its precincts, to become the neighbour of some returned nabob, or retired bill-broker, with no recommendation, save his ill-acquired wealth. I have not dismantled my mansion of its cumbrous, but richly carved furniture, to adopt, at a later period, a composition in imitation of it. No—I saw the rage for Grecian and Roman decoration pass by, as calmly as I have since seen them replaced by the angular *ameublement* of the melo-dramatic Emperor of the French; and have lived to witness the solid magnificence of the fourteenth Louis, revived

by those who are as incapable of comprehending, as of emulating the splendor and abilities of that dignified model for kings. I smile at beholding the ill-executed imitations in the mansions of my acquaintance, of the costly furniture which, from mine, has never been displaced; while they would gladly purchase back their ancestral possessions from the brokers who have collected them to sell again at more than thrice their original cost.

Yes, it is very satisfactory to my feelings to witness the restoration of true taste in furniture, at least; almost as much so as it was to see Louis XVIII. restored to the throne of his forefathers, whence his less fortunate brother has been exiled. We have fallen upon evil days; "the march of intellect," as they call it, has been in my opinion a triumphal march over the prostrated privileges of sovereigns, who dare no longer consider their subjects as their unalienable property, nor govern by the good old monarchical principle of "*Je veux.*"

This, is a melancholy and an unnatural state of things; but I console myself with thinking that it cannot last, though, alas! it bids fair to endure my time; consequently, I am somewhat disposed to adopt the philosophy of the fifteenth Louis, and exclaim "*Après nous le déluge.*"

I wish I had children, for I should in that case, have had now around me a third generation of scions from the parent stem, who might have loved me, and whom I might have loved; at all events, over whose destinies my fortune would have given me an influence, and next to loving, and being loved, is the pleasure of governing. But this wearisome solitude, imposed by age and infirmities, and uncheered by fond faces, or affectionate voices, it is hard to bear. Nature has implanted in every breast the yearning desire to be an object of sympathy and affection to its fellow. The young feel it, but they feel too, the glad consciousness of possessing the power to excite, and repay the sentiment; while the old are too well aware how unlovely is age, not to distrust the appearance of an attachment, they fear they are incapable of creating. They become suspicious and peevish from this humiliating self-knowledge, and consequently less worthy of the affection for which they yearn.

Every one now writes, and the occupation may serve to amuse me, even though its fruits fail to amuse others; and thus I who love to live in the past, may borrow from it the means of rendering the present less insupportable. Shall I then take courage, make my confessions to the

public, and trust to it for absolution? It is an indulgent monster after all, which swallows much that is bad. Why, therefore, should I fear it? But who will read the confessions of an old woman? and in an age when every thing old, except furniture, plate, and wine, is exploded? *N'importe,* if those only wrote, who were sure of being read, we should have fewer authors; and the shelves of libraries would not groan beneath then weight of dusty tomes more *vo*luminous than luminous. Yes, I *will* write my memoirs.

"Did your ladyship speak?" asked that much enduring woman, my *dame de compagnie,* one of the most uncompanionable of that class of persons denominated companions. My conscience does sometimes reproach me for sundry pettish reproofs, and petulant phoos and pshaws, addressed to this modern Griselda, who "assents to nil I will, or do, or say," with a meekness very trying to a temper like mine. She, however, is at least ten years my junior, and will, in all human probability, live to enjoy the comfortable provision I have secured her in my will; thinking perhaps that she has well earned it, by a twenty years' daily and hourly practice of that difficult virtue—Patience.

Yes, I *will* write my confessions, and "naught extenuate, or set down aught in malice." As a proof of my sincerity, I shall record my dialogue with my *dame de compagnie.*

"Mrs. Vincent, ring the bell, if you please—here, that will do; you always ring it as if you imagined the servants to be deaf."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon; but, if you will be pleased to recollect, you, this morning, complained that I rang the bell so gently that the servants never heard the first pull."

"Pray don't ask me to be pleased to recollect; I never am pleased to recollect such puerile fiddle faddle. Your memory is so tenacious, that you can quote every syllable I utter in the course of a week."

It will be perceived by the malicious reader, that in my petulance I was unconsciously comprising my own conversation within the contemptuous epithet of fiddle faddle. But whether my unhappy companion was equally acute, I cannot determine; for she was far too well disciplined to allow any indication of discovery to be perceptible.

"Why don't you ring the bell again? you see no one has answered."

Enter John.

"And so John, here has Mrs. Vincent been ringing this last half hour. It really is too provoking that none of you will answer the bell."

"Very sorry, indeed, your ladyship; but I only heard the bell once."

"There, you are convinced, Mrs. Vincent; I always tell you, that you do not ring sufficiently loud; I wish you would remember this another time. Let me consider, what did I want. What did I require, Mrs. Vincent?"

"Indeed, madam, I do not know, your ladyship did not inform me."

"There it is, you never remember what I want; it really is enough to vex a saint."

"I'm sure, madam, I am very sorry."

"So you always say, I hear nothing but 'I beg your pardon,' and 'I am very sorry,' all day long.—Place the easy chair with an extra pillow before my writing-desk, wheel the desk close to the window, and put a tabouret for my feet. There, that will do. See that the pens are good, the ink not too thick, and lay a quire of foolscap wove paper on the desk; not that abominable glazed paper which dazzles my eyes. I intend to write, Mrs. Vincent, yes, to write a good deal, unless it should fatigue me: so wipe my spectacles. You had better remain in the room, to see that the fire does not go out. You can read, if you like it; but mind you do not make a noise in turning over the leaves, you know you have a trick of doing so. And remember, too, you do not make that disagreeable sound to which you are much addicted, a sort of clearing of the trachea, which is extremely trying to my nerves. There again, Mrs. Vincent, have I not told you a thousand times not to give way to that offensive habit of sighing. I cannot bear it."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon, I am very sor"—

"Oh! dear—Oh! dear, I never can say a word to you, that you do not forthwith answer me with 'I beg your pardon, I am very sorry.'"

"Indeed, madam"—

"Don't say another word, spare my nerves; you know, or ought to know, that I detest explanations."

If my readers are not disgusted with this specimen of my irritability and egotism, I will proceed with my task.

My first recollections point to Walsingham Castle, where my happiest days were passed. Well do I remember a certain dressing-room in it that breathed the mingled odours of every fragrant flower, odours ever since associated in my mind with the memory of that chamber and its inmate.

E. T. Parris *H. Cook*

Lady Walsingham

Reclined in an easy chair, propped by pillows, a fragile form draped in muslin of a snowy whiteness, used to meet my gaze. A pale but beautiful face, with large lustrous eyes, whose tender expression is even now remembered, used to welcome me with smiles. A soft delicate hand used to smooth my curls, and draw me fondly to her heart; and a low sweet voice, that only uttered words of love, used to greet me. Never can I forget the warm tears that often fell on my face and shoulders, when strained in the convulsive embrace of that lovely being.

"Why does mamma weep when she kisses me?" demanded I, one day, of the upper nurse.

"You must not ask questions, Lady Arabella," was the satisfactory reply; a reply that generally met all the interrogatories I addressed to the pragmatical Mrs. Sydenham.

Good Mrs. Mary, as I designated her assistant, was less taciturn; and to my reiterated demand of why mamma wept? told me, with a deep sigh and melancholy shake of the head, that it was because mamma was going to leave me; and was sorry.

"But she sha'n't go, if she does not like it," answered I, with the wilfulness that even then characterised me, "I won't let her go."

"Poor child," murmured good Mrs. Mary, and a tear trembled in her eye.

The next time I entered the odorous dressing-room, mamma appeared to me suffering more than usual. Papa was sitting by her side, and held one of her hands in his. She embraced me fondly, and he took me on his knee. They looked at me, and then at each other, with an expression so piteous, that it reminded me of good Mrs. Mary's explanation of mamma's tears, and I uttered imploringly, "Do not go away, dear sweet mamma, stay with papa, and Arabella."

She burst into a passion of tears, and my father, too, became greatly agitated.

"Oh! yes," resumed I, "good Mrs. Mary told me you wept because you were sorry to go away."

She sobbed in agony, and caught me to her breast, and my father pressed us both in his arms.

I saw my mother no more in the fragrant dressing-room; but was afterwards taken a few times to her bedroom, whence my father seldom moved. She looked paler than ever, and her voice was so low, that it

could only whisper; still it uttered fond words, and sounded sweetly in my ears. Every one moved so gently, and spoke so softly in that room, that my steps only were heard; the other persons glided about like shadows. My father looked nearly as pallid as my mother, and scarcely ever glanced from her; unless when he turned to conceal the tears, that were continually springing to his eyes.

One day, I was sent for, and found my mother supported by pillows, and her eyes half closed. My father had been reading aloud to her; and I heard her murmur, "Thy will, not mine, be done, O Lord!"

He took me in his arms, and held me to her. She pressed me faintly, but fondly; a few burning tears fell on my face, and she pronounced, in accents broken by the approach of death, a mother's last blessing. I, too, wept, though, alas! I knew not then what bitter cause I had for tears; and when my father offered to withdraw me from her fond embrace, I clung passionately to her. At this moment, the clergyman was announced: she relaxed her hold of me, and I was taken from the chamber violently sobbing.

I remember, that when I reached the door, I looked back, and caught her tearful eyes strained to see me to the last. What agony was then in their expression!

I never saw my mother again, for she died in two hours after I was torn from her. To this early bereavement of the truest, tenderest friend that youth can ever know, I attribute all the errors of my life.

The next day, and the following one, I asked repeatedly to be taken to mamma. Mrs. Sydenham looked grave, said it could not be; and good Mistress Mary wept, and, though always affectionate to me, appeared still more so, notwithstanding that Mrs. Sydenham more than once reprimanded her, and sternly desired her not to spoil me.

In a week after, I was dressed in black, and noticed that all the household was similarly clad. I objected to this change in my dress, and said that mamma would not like my ugly black frock, as she was only fond of pretty white ones. This remark produced a few more tears from good Mistress Mary, who was again rebuked by Mrs. Sydenham, for being, as she termed it, always whimpering. I had an instinctive dislike to the upper nurse, and a preference to Mary, whose tears, though I knew not their source, soothed me.

The next day, the sounds of many carriage wheels, and the champing of steeds, drew me to the window of my nursery, which overlooked the court of the castle. I clapped my hands in childish glee, when I saw the cortege decked with nodding plumes, that moved slowly and proudly along.

"Where are all these fine carriages going?" asked I, "and why are so many of them black?"

"They are taking away your mamma," answered Mary, as well as her tears and sobs would allow her.

I, too, began to weep, exclaiming that they should not take my own dear, sweet mamma away, but the cortege continued to advance, until the last nodding plume vanished from my tearful sight, and I sank on the bosom of good Mary, exhausted by my sorrow. How silent was the whole castle! Not a sound was heard save the tolling of the church bell, that came booming on the ear from the distance, or the chimes of the great clock, as it marked the flight of time.

The gloom chilled me, and yet it was in unison with my feelings; for though too young to comprehend the misfortune that had befallen me, a mysterious sympathy seemed to render silence and sorrow congenial to me.

The following day, my father sent for me. I found him in the library, so pale and care worn, that, young as I was, the alteration in his appearance struck me forcibly. He was clad in deep mourning, and his eyes indicated that tears had lately been no strangers to them.

I rushed into his arms and wept as I bid my face in his bosom, to which I fondly nestled, as I had been wont to do to the maternal one. He dismissed the attendant; and as he bent his head over mine, I felt his tears fall on my hair and neck, and heard the deep sighs that heaved his breast.

"You weep, dear papa," said I, "because my own sweet mamma is gone away. She, too, wept, for she was sorry to leave you and me. Do you remember, papa, how she cried and kissed us both?"

He clasped me convulsively, called me his last, his only comfort.

"But won't dear mamma come back to us?" asked I.

"No, my precious child, never; but we shall go to her."

"O! I am so glad; I hope, papa, it will be soon. And shall we too go in that black coach, with all the nodding feathers? and will the bells toll, as

when dear mamma went? How glad I shall be that day; and you, papa, will you not be glad?"

My poor father sobbed aloud, and I repeatedly kissed his cheek.

"Look here, my dear Arabella," said he, opening the miniature case now before me, "Do you know this face?'

"'Tis my own mamma; my dear, sweet mamma," answered I. "O! let me always have it to look at."

From this period, I spent a considerable portion of every day with my father, who never failed to show me the cherished miniature, or to talk to me of its dear and lost original.

A year elapsed before he left the solitude of Walsingham Castle; during that epoch he made me comprehend that my mother was dead. How well I recollect the feeling of awe that crept through my young heart, as he explained the nature of this tremendous but inevitable passage to eternity. Yet, though awed, I loved to dwell on the subject; and death and a union with my mother, henceforth became an association of ideas in my mind, that robbed the one of its terrors, and softened the regret entertained for the other.

My father, never of a robust constitution, began to show symptoms of confirmed ill health, in less than a year from the decease of my mother. So fervent had been his attachment to her, that time, though it soothed the bitterness of grief, could not obliterate her image, or console him for her loss; and I believe, that had he been childless, he would have hailed death as a release from an existence which had lost all charm for him since she had been torn from his arms.

It was solely for my sake that he submitted to a *régime* the most abstemious, and to a system of medical care, which condemned him to the most monotonous mode of existence imaginable. I was his constant companion; seated on a low tabouret, by his invalid chair or sofa, I established all my toys in his library, built card houses on his couch, accompanied him in all his airings, prattling to him every thought that passed through my infant mind, and never leaving him but with sorrow.

A fear that I inherited the malady of my mother, or his own delicacy of constitution, operated continually on his imagination, rendered morbidly apprehensive, by a degree of sensibility rarely belonging to the male character, and nursed into existence by the loss he had sustained, and the seclusion in which he lived.

Mrs. Sydenham had been discharged soon after my mother's death, owing to some symptoms of dislike displayed towards her by me; and good Mrs. Mary, in consequence of the partiality I had evinced towards her, was elevated to the place of upper nurse.

Various and minute were the questions put by my poor dear father to her, when she brought me every morning to the library.

"How had I slept—had I eat my breakfast with appetite—had I been cheerful?" were interrogatories daily made. My countenance was anxiously examined, and my pulse felt, by the affectionate and nervous valetudinarian; and a physician was in regular attendance, to report on the state of my health.

No wonder, then, that I soon began to discover that I was an object of no little importance in the house; a discovery almost always dangerous to the discoverer, whether infant or adult. Consequently, I speedily displayed some infallible proofs of my acquired knowledge, by indulging in sundry caprices and petulancies not peculiarly agreeable to good Mrs. Mary; and very alarming to my poor father, when repeated to him, in my nurse's phraseology, which thus represented my ebullitions of ill humour: "Lady Arabella had been a little uneasy all the morning. Her ladyship had made a good breakfast, it was true, but she had refused to allow her mouth to be washed after, which she, good Mrs. Mary, was afraid was a sign of something feverish in the habit. Her little ladyship had thrown by all her dolls—in short, she had not been as cheerful as usual."

Well did I observe the anxiety this intelligence occasioned my too indulgent parent; and my pride was gratified by it. The bell was rung, Dr. Warminster, the Halford of his day, sent for, and all good Mrs. Mary's information detailed to him with scrupulous exactitude. My pulse was felt, my tongue examined, my eyes scrutinised; and after the termination of this profound investigation, I was pronounced, *ex cathedrâ,* to be in a state of perfect health.

"But, my dear doctor," asked my father, "how do you account for her uneasiness? Do you not think it must have proceeded from some incipient feverish excitement acting on the system, some nervous derangement—eh, my good doctor?"

"I think, my dear lord," was the answer, "that your little girl requires at this period a governess more than a physician; and advise, by all means,

your lordship's providing her with one, as soon as a person befitting the situation can be found."

"A governess, doctor, you surprise me," replied my father, "What can a governess have to do with the symptoms of uneasiness I have related?"

"A good one, may prevent a repetition of them, my lord. The truth is, your daughter is now of an age to stand in need of a more intellectual person than Mrs. Mary; one who can control her temper and direct her pursuits, as well as attend to her health."

"I assure you, doctor, that her temper is faultless," said my father, "and with regard to her pursuits, she is as far advanced as most children of her age. She can already spell several words, and is peculiarly intelligent."

"Her intelligence I admit," responded the doctor, with a peculiar smile, "but her progress in learning I think not very forward. Why, let me see, Lady Arabella must be now eight years old; and I do not know a child of that age that cannot read fluently, and speak two or more languages."

How attentively I listened to this dialogue! and how cordially did I dislike Doctor Warminster, who made so light of my acquirements!

My poor father looked distressed, and half offended; for I believe, that, judging from the precocious shrewdness of my observations viewed through the flattering medium of parental affection, he had hitherto considered me a sort of prodigy. The truth is, that from never having mingled with other children, and having lived so continually with my father, my intellectual faculties had attained a maturity disproportioned to my age and acquirements. I could *think* long before I could *read*; and now, that for the first time, I became aware that children of my age were more advanced in education than myself, my vanity was cruelly wounded; and I determined, with that strong volition that even then formed a peculiar characteristic of my nature, to forthwith apply myself to study.

When Doctor Warminster withdrew, I approached my father, and looking in his face, asked him, in a reproachful tone, why I had not been taught to read? He appeared embarrassed, but tenderly embracing me, said that my studies should forthwith commence.

"What is a governess?" demanded I.

"A lady, my dear," replied my father, "who undertakes to instruct children in all that it is necessary that they should know."

"Then let me have a governess directly, papa; however she must be a nice, pretty governess; not an old ugly woman like Mrs. Sydenham, but one who will teach me to read very soon, and help me to build card houses on your sofa."

Never shall I forget the expression of perplexity which my poor father's countenance exhibited at this request.

"Why, my child," answered he, "when you have a governess, you must study your lessons with her, in another apartment;" and he sighed deeply as he finished the sentence.

"But I *won't* learn my lessons any where else but here," rejoined I petulantly; "and my governess shall teach me *here!*" And I burst into a paroxysm of tears.

This exhibition of my temper convinced my poor father of the justice of Doctor Warminster's observations relative to the necessity of having a governess for me. But it did not suggest to him the prudence of checking my wilfulness; for instead of reprehending my peevishness, he fondly embraced and soothed me, promising that I should have a nice governess; though he was less explicit as to his intentions respecting her professional duties, a point which I had determined on exacting, being performed in his presence in the library.

A few letters were next day addressed to the nearest female relations of my father, stating his desire of procuring a governess for me. I know not whether he informed them that good looks were an indispensible requisite in the lady who was to undertake the office; but I *do* know that the half dozen Mistresses and Misses who came recommended by them, might have served as specimens of female ugliness. A glance at me, who returned it by a look of undisguised disapproval of the candidates, induced my father to dismiss each successively, with a polite intimation that they should hear from him in a few days.

Then came letters of remonstrance from the ladies who had sent them; each being extremely surprised that her *protegeé,* Mrs. or Miss Tomkins or Thompson, had not been engaged, as she was precisely the most suitable, desirable, and appropriate person in existence. All these letters, of course, my father was compelled to answer; and the difficulty and anxiety of inventing plausible excuses, which should be satisfactory to the patronesses, and yet not unjust or offensive to the objects of their

recommendation, increased the nervous trepidation of the poor invalid in no common degree.

I now began to think that a pretty governess was an unattainable good; and, in proportion to this belief, became my impatient desire to possess so precious a rarity. My father, with some hesitation and embarrassment, informed Doctor Warminster of his wish to procure a young lady as governess; and added, that his poor dear Arabella positively insisted that good looks should distinguish the person to be selected for the situation.

I was present when this statement was made; and could as little imagine why my poor father's pale cheek became tinged with red, as I could divine why Doctor Warminster first looked surprised, then smiled in a peculiar way, and at length, rubbing his hands, and positively chuckling outright, repeated,

"A *young* and *pretty* governess, my lord? why, bless my soul, youth and beauty are so generally objected to in teachers, that I am rather surprised —that is, I am somewhat astonished that your lordship should consider them as indispensible requisites."

My father's cheek became still more red, as he hesitatingly replied,

"You mistake, my good doctor, it is not I, but my daughter, who entertains this desire; and my poor Arabella has been so accustomed to be indulged, that in a point on which she seems to have set her heart, I do not wish that she should be thwarted."

"But your lordship is aware, that a young and pretty woman living in the house of a single man, may give rise to surmises injurious to her, and not agreeable to her employer."

My father looked still more embarrassed, but he falteringly replied,

"My reputation, doctor, ought to be, I should hope, a sufficient guarantee against all such surmises. No one who knows me, could suppose that I could so far forget what is due to my only child, as to place an instructress over her, of whose morals I had not the best opinion."

"I beg your lordship's pardon; *I* did not presume to doubt your morals, nor those of the young lady, whoever she may be, who is to fill the situation of governess to Lady Arabella; I only alluded to what the world would be likely to say on such a subject."

"I won't have an ugly governess, that I won't," said I, bursting into tears; for I had conceived the impression, that Doctor Warminster was opposed to my having a pretty one.

The doctor smiled spitefully, as I thought; and my poor father wiped my eyes, and kissed my cheeks. Encouraged by his caresses, I repeated, "I *will* have a pretty governess! a *very* pretty governess! shan't I, dear papa?"

As I thus vociferated, I looked triumphantly at the doctor, who took his leave, promising to seek for the sort of person "that would satisfy the fastidious taste of Lady Arabella."

The following week brought a letter from the widow of a beneficed clergyman on one of my father's estates, detailing, that from her scanty income and large family, she was anxious to place one of her daughters in some family as governess; and entreating his lordship to exert himself with his female relations to procure her a situation. She added, that she hoped the youth of her daughter would not be an insuperable objection, as she was remarkably steady.

"Why, this is the very thing," said my father.

"What, papa?" asked I.

"I think, my dear," answered he, "that I have at last found you a governess."

"O! I am so glad, so very glad," and I clapped my hands with joy; "is she very young, dear papa? and is she very, *very* pretty?"

"Yes, very young, my dear," replied my father, "and very good, I am sure; for her father was an exemplary man, and her mother, I have heard, is an amiable woman."

"But is she very pretty, papa?"

"I don't know, my love, for I have never seen her; but, dear Arabella, remember what I have often told you, that it is better to be good than pretty."

"But I will have her pretty, and good too; for all pretty people are good, and ugly people are bad and cross."

"Indeed you are wrong, my child."

Doubtlessly he was proceeding to demonstrate my error; but I interrupted him, by saying,

"No, indeed, papa, I am not wrong; don't you remember how pretty, how very, very pretty my own dear sweet mamma was, and you often told me, no one was ever so good."

He pressed me to his breast, and a tear moistened my cheek; but I had not yet finished my exordium, so continued:

"And you, dear papa, you are very pretty, and who was ever so good?"

He kissed me again.

"But naughty Mrs. Sydenham, who was always cross and disagreeable, she was ugly, very ugly, was she not, papa? while good Mrs. Mary is pretty, though not so pretty as I want my governess to be. Yes, all pretty people are good, and ugly people are naughty; so I *will* have a *pretty* governess."

The allusion to my mother, and perhaps the compliment to himself, silenced, if they did not convince my too indulgent father; and he determined to write to Mrs. Melville, to send up her daughter, as he wished to engage a governess for his little girl. If Miss Melville suited, she would be retained; and if not, a compensation would be bestowed upon her for the trouble and expense of the journey.

I counted the hours until an answer was received; and shortly after, Miss Melville, attended by her brother, arrived. How my heart palpitated when she was announced! and how I longed to have the deep bonnet and black veil, which though turned back, still shaded her face, removed, that I might ascertain if she was indeed *very* pretty.

"Tell her to take off her bonnet, dear papa," whispered I.

"No, not now, my dear," said he, *sotto voce.*

The sound of her voice pleased me, it was low, soft, and clear; and there was a timidity in her manner, that prepossessed me in her favour.

My father kindly desired that her brother might remain in the house, and ordered an apartment to be prepared for him, and good Mrs. Mary was summoned, to conduct Miss Melville to hers.

"Let me go with her," said I, influenced by the curiosity I experienced to behold her face; and taking her hand, I led her up the grand staircase, though good Mrs. Mary was for conducting her by the back stairs. When we had entered the room prepared for her, I scarcely allowed her to remove her gloves, before I entreated her to take off her bonnet; nay, I began to untie its strings myself, so impatient was I to examine her face. An exclamation of delight escaped me as I beheld it; for never did a

more lovely one meet human gaze. A profusion of chestnut coloured silken ringlets shaded a countenance of exquisite beauty, on which candour and innocence had set their seal; and a figure, slight but of rounded symmetry, was revealed when the large cloak in which it had been enveloped was removed.

Her beautiful face became suffused with blushes as I exclaimed, clapping my hands all the while,

"O yes, she is *so* pretty, *so* very, *very* pretty! Now, I have a nice pretty governess, I never will let her leave me!" and I kissed her affectionately.

I thought, but perhaps it might be only fancy, that good Mrs. Mary did not seem so delighted with my new governess as I expected she would be, for I had already made up my mind that all who loved me should love her; consequently, I resented this imagined slight to my new favourite.

I left her, while she prepared to change her travelling dress for another, and rushed frantic with joy to my father, vehemently exclaiming, "Oh! dear papa, she is *so* beautiful, *so* very, very beautiful, that I am sure she must be good!"

I was disappointed by the air of indifference with which this information was received; and was disposed to reproach my father with his insensibility, but I observed that he looked more pale and languid than usual, and therefore from an instinct of affection forbore.

Doctor Warminster coming in soon after, pronounced that my father had caught a cold, and manifested a feverish tendency; consequently, commanded that he should confine himself to his chamber for a day or two, and see no one.

How I hated the doctor for this command! for I had set my heart on astonishing my father by the beauty of Miss Melville; and could not support with common patience, the idea of any postponement of the gratification of my impetuous wishes.

"Perhaps, my dear doctor, you would do me the favour of seeing Miss Melville and her brother," said my father. "You will, in a conversation with her, ascertain whether she is capable of discharging the duties of the situation which I wish her to fill; for, if otherwise, the sooner she knows that she cannot retain it, the less painful will be the loss of it to her."

"I won't have my pretty governess sent away," sobbed I—"I love Miss Melville, and I *will* have her stay with me always."

My father gave a look of helpless languor to the doctor, who in return shrugged up his shoulders, a favourite movement with him when not pleased, and left the library to see Miss Melville, and report progress.

"I know *he* won't like my pretty governess," said I; "for he wanted me to have an ugly old cross one, I know he did; and I don't like nasty, ugly Doctor Warminster, that I don't!"

"Really, my dear Arabella," replied my father, "you are now unjust, and unreasonable. Doctor Warminster has been always kind and attentive, and you grieve me when I see you thus obstinate and ungrateful."

"You grieve me," was the severest reproof I had ever heard from my kind father's lips, and its power over me was omnipotent. It immediately rendered me docile; and, as I kissed him, I promised never again to designate Doctor Warminster, as being "nasty," or "ugly;" two expressions which my father observed were exceedingly unbecoming in the mouth of a young lady.

I counted the minutes impatiently during the doctor's absence. At the end of an hour, however, he returned; and confirmed my report as to the appearance of Miss Melville, by stating it to be, according to his guarded phraseology, "peculiarly prepossessing. But what is more important," continued he, "the young lady appears sensible, modest, intelligent, and well educated; and, notwithstanding her youth, I hope your lordship will have reason to be satisfied with her. The brother, too, is a well mannered, gentlemanly person, who wishes to enter the church, for which he has been brought up."

My father appeared highly gratified by this account, while I, though greatly pleased at having my favourable impressions relative to my pretty governess confirmed, felt abashed at the consciousness of the injustice I had rendered to Dr. Warminster.

The indisposition of my poor father proved more serious than even his physician had first apprehended. It confined him to his bedroom for above a fortnight, to which I was prohibited more than a daily visit of five minutes' duration, perfect quiet being pronounced essential to his recovery. But even in that limited space I forgot not to repeat the warmest praises of dear, good Miss Melville, omitting the epithet "pretty," which she had requested me never to apply to her.

"But you *are* pretty, prettier than any one," would I say, in remonstrance to her request on this subject; "and the truth should always be spoken, papa has often told me."

"We are all formed by the Almighty," would Miss Melville answer, "it is His will, that we should be plain, or otherwise, and we should never attach any importance to the matter."

The fortnight of my father's illness being spent entirely with my governess, enabled me to make a rapid progress in learning. Her gentleness, and patient attention, were assisted by my own anxious desire, and I was delighted, when not at my lessons, to be read to by Miss Melville. Though the time passed quickly, and agreeably in my new studies, still I longed for my dear father's convalescence, that I might enjoy his society as well as Miss Melville's, and that I might also witness his surprise and pleasure at beholding her. He evinced, however, no desire on this point; on the contrary, he had been some days in the library, and had resumed his ordinary routine of life, and yet he still postponed a compliance with my oft reiterated request to see her.

What he refused to my entreaties, he at length yielded to my tears; and it was agreed that Miss Melville should be invited to the library that evening. I watched, anxiously watched his countenance, as she entered the room. But, to my great surprise and disappointment, I discovered no symptom of the rapturous admiration I had childishly anticipated. His reception of her was polite, nay, kind; and her timidity, which had no rustic awkwardness in it, but evidently arose from native modesty, rendered him still more affable to her.

Vain of the little I had already acquired, I now displayed all my learning to my delighted father, who was as surprised as gratified by my rapid progress.

Two hours fleeted quickly and happily away: Miss Melville was requested to give a list of all the books required for my scholastic pursuits; and politely offered permission to use any works the library contained, for her own perusal. She then left my father's presence, evidently pleased with her reception; and my father seemed no less so with her.

The next day, her brother was received by my father, who, after a long conversation, found him so sensible and well informed, that he wrote a

letter to his friend the Bishop of ———, to recommend him for holy orders; being fully determined to bestow on him a small living in his gift.

This unlooked for good fortune delighted Miss Melville, who devoted every hour, and I may add every thought, to my improvement, which was as rapid as it was gratifying to my father. Our evenings were always spent in the library; where, in a short time, at my request, a pianoforte was installed, from which Miss Melville drew sounds that answer only to a master hand. We soon persuaded her to accompany them with her voice; and it would be difficult to say, whether the father or daughter listened with more pleasure to her dulcet tones.

Having heard my father desire Doctor Warminster to look out for a gentleman to read to him, an hour or two a day, his own sight being too weak to permit his studying without pain, I entreated him to let Miss Melville undertake this office. At first he declined, but at length yielded, as he generally did, to my pertinacious perseverance.

The flexibility, and delicate sweetness of her voice, the distinctness of her enunciation, and the correctness of her style, at once surprised and charmed him. How triumphant was I, at witnessing this effect, though I longed to be able to share this new task with her. Two hours a day were henceforth devoted to this occupation. The books selected had a reference to my studies. History, travels, and belles lettres were perused. I soon learned to point out, on the map, the different places named in the books, and made no inconsiderable progress in chronology. My mind expanded; every day marked my improvement, and my father witnessed it with gratitude and pleasure. His health, too, appeared to become less delicate, now that he had a constant and cheerful society, and music, which always soothed and cheered him.

Six months flew by, and found me each day more fondly attached to Miss Melville. In her gentle ear was poured every thought of my youthful mind, and on her sympathy did I always count, and never in vain in all my pleasures or pains, and the latter were but "few, and far between." The manner of my dear father towards this charming young woman, was marked by a respectful kindness, that never varied, a kindness as remote from familiarity as from *hauteur.* Hers towards him, was the deferential attention of a modest young woman, who never presumed on his affability, but was anxious to merit a continuance of it.

Doctor Warminster soon became one of her warmest friends, and was never tired of commending her to my father.

We were all happy, when a letter arrived, announcing a visit from a maiden aunt of my father, who rarely visited London, but who, when she came, took up her abode at his mansion. Young as I was, I could perceive that this announcement gave him pain; and when he communicated it to Doctor Warminster, the good man shook his head and shrugged his shoulders in a manner that indicated quite as expressively as words could do, that the expected arrival afforded him no satisfaction. I had no recollection of the Lady Theodosia Conningsby, but beholding the impression her intended visit conveyed, I began to form a thousand fancies relative to her. I observed that my father became thoughtful and nervous from the moment her intention of coming was announced, until she made her appearance; and this alteration in him impressed me with no pleasurable anticipations with regard to the cause of it.

Punctual to the hour she had named, Lady Theodosia Conningsby's old fashioned chariot, surmounted by capacious imperials, and high bonnet-cases, rolled to the door. Two ancient servitors, in rich liveries, made in a fashion as obsolete as that of the chariot, slowly descended from the roomy dicky-box, and as slowly assisted their mistress to alight, who, followed by her female attendant, bearing in her arms a lap-dog, entered the house.

When Miss Melville and I were summoned to the library in the evening, we found Lady Theodosia seated *vis-à-vis* to my father, in a large arm-chair. Her appearance was remarkably *outrée*—her dress being that *à-la-mode,* some half a century before. She was tall and extremely thin, her face long and meagre, her nose sharply pointed, her lips thin and descending at the corners, and her chin of inordinate length, and singularly protruded, as if in search of a view of the rest of her face. But her eyes! There is no possibility of rendering justice to them. They were of a light greenish hue, and were so obliquely placed in their sockets that when fixed on one object, she seemed to be regarding some other, in a precisely contrary direction.

In short, her whole appearance would have been considered grotesque, had not an expression of extreme ill nature and acerbity pervaded every portion of her physiognomy, and the obliquity of her vision increased this repulsive and sinister character.

"Give me leave to present to you Miss Melville," said my father politely—and Miss Melville courtesied to Lady Theodosia, who vouchsafed not the slightest notice in return.

"This is my daughter," continued my father, who had not observed her ladyship's rudeness to my governess. "Arabella, go and welcome Lady Theodosia."

I approached her with reluctance—and she pressed her skinny and parched lips to my forehead. I was for retreating after this salutation, but she sternly told me to remain, that she might examine my face, and see which of the family I most resembled. She drew forth a pair of spectacles, carefully wiped them, placed them astride her nose, and then deliberately surveyed me.

"I think, nephew, that she resembles my grandmother very strongly—don't you agree with me? You, of course, never saw the Duchess, but her portrait you must remember. I was considered to bear a very striking family likeness to her."

My poor father, to whom I turned an appealing glance, could with difficulty repress a smile that played about his lips; and Miss Melville looked intently at the carpet to avoid meeting my eyes.

"Arabella has the family nose," continued Lady Theodosia, "yes, we all have that feature high and prominent, a beauty peculiar to those of noble and ancient race. The Bourbons all have it. Her eyes, too, are exactly like those of my grandmother. Do you not remember the portrait?"

"I confess the likeness does not strike me," replied my father.

"Whom then *do* you think she resembles?" demanded Lady Theodosia in an imperious tone.

"Her dear mother," replied my father—and his lip trembled with emotion, as it never failed to do when she was alluded to.

"I see not the slightest likeness," answered she, "on the contrary, I think the child bears a most remarkable family resemblance to *our* family," laying a peculiar emphasis on the word *our*.

My father, who detested arguments, refrained from dissenting. But this tacit admission of her opinion by no means satisfied the pertinacious old lady.

"I perceive, nephew, that you do not agree with me," resumed she.

"I confess we differ," said my father, deprecatingly, "but every eye, you know, varies in its perception on those points."

"No, nephew, I can admit no such fallacy. The eyes must be strange eyes indeed,"—and here she squinted most abominably—"that do not discover that Arabella's are as like those of her grandmother's portrait as it is possible for eyes to be, and bear a strong resemblance to mine."

"No they don't—do they papa?" exclaimed I—all my incipient vanity wounded by the assertion, and tears starting to the lids of the libelled orbs. A beseeching look from my father, and a terrified one from Miss Melville prevented me from finishing the sentence, which would have been extremely offensive to Lady Theodosia.

"Upon my word, I cannot compliment the young person who enacts the part of governess to your daughter, on her pupil's progress in politeness," said Lady Theodosia haughtily and bitterly. "Had you, nephew, engaged Mistress Jefferson, whom I recommended, I think Lady Arabella would have been guilty of no such instance of ill breeding as that to which I have been a disgusted witness."

Miss Melville's cheeks were suffused with blushes, and my poor father felt scarcely less embarrassed at the unfeeling rudeness of his callous and acrimonious aunt.

"May I inquire *why* you did not attend to *my* recommendation, and to whom you are indebted for the young person before me, whose extreme juvenility and inexperience render her totally unfit for so grave and important a task?"

Tears now stole down the fair cheeks of Miss Melville, which I observing, immediately ran and embraced her, begging her not to weep at any thing that old cross lady said.

"'Pon my word, this is too bad, nephew," said my aunt angrily, "I never beheld such a spoilt and rude child in my life as your daughter. But this comes of having *young* governesses, who fancy themselves beauties forsooth, and who are, perhaps, encouraged in the erroneous belief by those who have the folly to employ them."

"Really, Lady Theodosia, I must entreat," said my father, agitated beyond measure, "that you will reserve your strictures for another occasion."

"Will your lordship excuse my withdrawing?" said Miss Melville, with that meekness that ever characterised her.

"Pray, by all means let her go—I always think that such persons are wholly out of their place when I see them intruded into the society of their superiors," observed Lady Theodosia.

I followed Miss Melville from the library, leaving my poor dear nervous father to support, as best he might, the continuation of his disagreeable aunt's discussion; and tried all my efforts to sooth Miss Melville, who wept bitterly at the rudeness to which she had been exposed.

When Dr. Warminster came next day, he found my poor father confined to bed, and more indisposed than he had lately been. Miss Melville had been summoned at an early hour of the morning to Lady Theodosia's dressing-room whence a long lecture from her ladyship sent her back—her cheeks crimsoned, and her eyes bathed in tears. It was at this moment that Doctor Warminster entered the school-room.

"Bless me, bless me, what is the matter?" asked the good man, on beholding the agitation of my governess. Sobs and tears were the only answer he received for five or six minutes; but when he had taken from the family medicine chest some sal volatile, and presented a glass of water, into which he had poured a few drops of it, to Miss Melville, she shortly became able to articulate.

"O doctor! you do not—cannot believe—the dreadful reports which Lady Theodosia asserts are circulated relative to me!"

"What reports? I know not even to what you refer; and I dare be sworn they originate wholly and solely in her ladyship's own brain, always prolific in ill-nature."

"She has said such cruel, cruel things to me, doctor!" and here the poor girl's tears streamed afresh. "Some of them," and she blushed to her very temples, "I could not repeat—they are too dreadful. She declares that my residence beneath the roof of an unmarried man is a gross violation of all decency, that my reputation is destroyed for ever, and that I must leave the house. O doctor! my poor mother—my sisters—my brother—what will they, what can they say, when they hear this dreadful calumny? But they know I am innocent!" and she wept bitterly. I heard no more, for I stole hastily from the apartment, ran to that of my father, and mounting on his bed, threw myself sobbing into his arms, exclaiming—

"Papa! papa! that nasty cross old lady has scolded poor dear Miss Melville, and made her cry, and said she shall not live with you and me. Do, dear papa, send that cross old lady away, and do not let my dear pretty governess leave me!"

My tears gushed plentifully at the dread of losing Miss Melville, and I declared with sobs that I could not be happy, I could not live, without my own pretty, dear, good governess. My poor father appeared greatly agitated, but Doctor Warminster, who now came to his room, informed him that he had succeeded in soothing the wounded feelings of Miss Melville.

"As your lordship is too much indisposed to bear being harrassed by any scene with this very troublesome lady, who has deranged all the comfort of your house, perhaps it would be as well for me to seek an interview with her, and endeavour to make her sensible of the mischief she has caused."

"How kind of you, my dear friend," replied my poor father, "do pray see her, and let me know the result."

In half an hour the doctor returned more discomposed than I thought he could ever have been rendered; for he was habitually a calm, dispassionate man.

"By Jove, my Lord," said he, "Lady Theodosia is a perfect she-dragon! she maintains that Miss Melville stands in a relation to your lordship which renders it improper, nay, impossible, to countenance her, or submit to remaining beneath the same roof. She has told the poor innocent young lady her opinion, and your lordship may judge its effect. To talk reason to this obstinate old lady is useless; she says that nothing but Miss Melville's leaving the house, and your placing some Mrs. Jefferson in her place, can induce her to believe the young lady not guilty."

"Good heavens! what shameful conduct!" observed my father, "what is to be done?"

"Nothing, that I know of," replied the doctor, "except to let the unmanageable old lady take herself off, and then the house will again be restored to its usual peace."

"I shall write her a few lines," resumed my father, "for it is impossible to let her entertain so erroneous an opinion of Miss Melville."

The note was written—what its contents might be I know not; but the result was that the old fashioned chariot conveyed its mistress and suite next day to the house of another relation, and we were relieved from her disagreeable presence.

A timidity, painful to witness, and impossible to dissipate, had now replaced Miss Melville's former gentle gaity, and easy, yet respectful, manners. In a few days, my father received a letter from his aunt, and another from the female relative with whom she had taken up her abode; and the evident discomposure their perusal produced, proved that they were not of a conciliatory character. But, as he threw them indignantly into the fire, as soon as read, I never had an opportunity of judging whether the epistolary style of Lady Theodosia was as offensive as the conversational.

In a very brief time after this occurrence came Mrs. Melville to reclaim her daughter. She, too, had been written to by Lady Theodosia, and in terms of such insulting reproach, relative to her daughter's supposed position in my father's house, that she immediately thought it necessary to come in person and remove her. My father learnt this intention and the cause with real regret, but I wept in agony and refused to be comforted. The good Doctor Warminster endeavoured to reason Mrs. Melville out of the scruples she entertained as to the propriety of leaving her daughter with me, though of the perfect innocence of that daughter she never had a doubt; but he could not prevail on her to alter her determination.

My kind and good father was lavish in his generosity towards mother and daughter; who left the house lamenting the necessity of the measure.

Previous to their departure, and to console me for it, a portrait was taken of Miss Melville. I have treasured it ever since, and even now cannot regard it without an affectionate recollection of the beautiful and amiable original.

Never shall I forget the evening that followed her leaving the house, where her presence had so long diffused cheerfulness. Her pianoforte stood silent, her accustomed chair empty, and her sweet clear voice was no longer heard reading aloud to my father, or gently and affectionately checking my froward impatience. Incessant weeping brought on a violent headache, followed by fever, during the paroxysms of which I

E. T. Parris *H. Cook*

Miss Melville

continually demanded Miss Melville, my own dear good pretty Miss Melville. My father, who anxiously watched over me, listened to my entreaties for my governess with sorrow, but promised, if I would be calm, and do all that Dr. Warminster required, that he would take me into the country as soon as I became well, to see dear Miss Melville. This promise cheered me, and from the moment it was made I begun to get better. I insisted on having her portrait on my bed; how often was the miniature now before me pressed to my feverish lips, and bathed with my tears—and how often did I ask my father to repeat to me his promise that as soon as I was able to travel, we should go to the country to see Miss Melville.

In a fortnight more, we were on our route to Melford, the village where her mother resided, attended by good Doctor Warminster, who did not think me sufficiently strong to forego his care. I could scarcely be kept quiet at the Inn, while the doctor went to announce our arrival, and to request that Miss Melville should come to me.

The kind hearted girl burst into tears when she saw my altered face, on which my recent malady had left visible traces; and my father was evidently touched with this proof of her affection for me.

Days stole on, and found us still dwelling in the inn at Melford, my health improving, and my poor father's less suffering than usual. Every allusion to leaving Miss Melville again brought tears to my eyes, and an anxiety that alarmed the fears of my father.

"What is to be done, my good doctor?" asked he one day after an exhibition of my grief at a reference to our departure—"my child cannot be reasoned out of her feelings in the present delicate state of her health. She is my only comfort, my only hope, doctor, the last scion of the family stock; what is to be done? There is no sacrifice I would not make to secure my poor Arabella the society and care of this estimable young lady, but I know not how to accomplish it."

"A mode has occurred to me, my lord," replied the doctor, musingly, "it is a singular one, and I should dread naming it to any person of your lordship's rank, were I not acquainted with the engrossing affection you entertain for your only child; and emboldened by the phrase you lately used, that there was no sacrifice you would not make to secure her the society of Miss Melville. May I proceed, my lord?"

"Certainly, doctor, though I am totally at a loss to imagine what sacrifice can secure the object we wish to obtain."

"Your lordship is aware, but probably not to the full extent, for the young lady in question, and her mother, with that delicacy which characterises them, have concealed it as much as possible, of the injury inflicted on their feelings, and on Miss Melville's reputation, by the slanderous reports circulated relative to her position in your lordship's family, by Lady Theodosia Conningsby."

"Yes, doctor, too well do I know it, for from my female relations, whose *protegées* I have refused to accept as governesses, have I received letters of recrimination, caused by the evil reports to which you allude."

"Has it never occurred to your lordship, how Miss Melville's presence beneath your roof might be secured without a possibility of scandal—*not* as Miss Melville, but as a married lady—in short, my lord, as Countess of Walsingham!"

"Good God, doctor! you have taken me quite by surprise. No, I never thought of such a possibility. The affection I entertained for Arabella's mother, always precluded the thought of giving her a successor in my heart, or in my house. My health, too, is so extremely delicate, as you are aware, that I stand more in need of a nurse than of a wife."

"But why might not your lordship find the best of all nurses in a wife? and, surely, a more gentle and amiable companion could not be found than Miss Melville. I observed how much her society solaced your solitude when she was beneath your roof, and what a gloom her absence occasioned. But in the present case, we are to consider the happiness of your daughter, as you so will it, even more than your own; and as that appears to depend on the society of this young lady, it is for your lordship to reflect whether you will, or will not, secure this advantage for her, by the only means in your power."

The result of this conversation, which the good doctor repeated to me many years after, was, that he was commissioned by my father, to make proposals of marriage to Miss Melville; who, much to her honour, though truly grateful, was by no means dazzled by them: nay, only yielded, at length, to the repeated representations of the doctor, that my health would, in its present delicate state, inevitably fall a sacrifice to a separation from her, to whom I was so fondly attached.

The marriage shortly after took place: and never had my father cause to repent it; for Lady Walsingham devoted her whole time to the duties of her new situation, and proved the truest, gentlest friend to him, and the most affectionate guide and monitress to me.

We went abroad for some years, visited the South of France and Italy; from the mild climate of which my father's health derived considerable benefit. But his wishes pointing to home, we returned to England, and having spent some months at Walsingham Castle, we took up our abode in London, that I might have the advantage of masters in finishing my studies.

And now it was that the malignity of my father's female relations manifested itself by every means in their power. Cards from each of them were left at his door, inscribed for *me*, lest, by any chance, the mistress of the mansion should imagine them to be intended for her. Lady Theodosia Walsingham had spared neither time nor trouble in propagating the most injurious reports against the wife of her nephew, who she everywhere represented as an artful, designing young adventuress, who had first seduced her poor, unhappy, weak-minded nephew, and then inveigled him into marriage. I was stated to be a victim to the tyranny of my stepmother, and my father was said to be the slave of her will.

The acquaintances to whom these falsehoods were repeated, were not slow in giving them circulation. My mother's family were apprised of them, and never having ceased to feel the wound their pride had received, from the selection of a governess as it successor to a scion of their aristocratic race, they lent a ready credence to every disadvantageous rumour relative to Lady Walsingham.

I became an object of general interest to the female members of both families, who, during the period of my father's widowhood, had never evinced the slightest anxiety about me. Letters were written to my father by them, requesting that I might be permitted to visit them occasionally. He would have returned a haughty, and decided negative to such requests, for he felt indignant at the implied insult offered to his excellent wife, but she entreated so urgently, that I might be suffered to go to them, that he at length yielded to her wishes. The good Dr. Warminster, too, advised a compliance, giving for reason that a refusal would only serve as a confirmation to the evil reports in circulation.

Never shall I forget the first visit I paid. I was then in my twelfth year, but from having always associated only with persons arrived at maturity, my mind was more formed than that of most children of that age. It was to the Marchioness of Rocktower, the aunt of my mother, that this first visit was paid; a cold, stately, formal being, who looked as if she had been born an old lady, and never had passed through the gradations of infancy, or girlhood. She kissed my forehead, examined my features, and protested that she was glad to find I so strongly resembled my poor dear mother—"Yes, I was a perfect Oranville, there was no mistaking the family likeness. How is it that you are alone, my dear?" she then added.

"I wanted mamma to come with me," answered I; "but she would not."

"What! do you call *her*, mamma?"

"Oh! yes, ever since she has been Lady Walsingham."

"I wonder they did not exact the epithet before," murmured she spitefully. "And have you no governess, Arabella?"

"Mamma is my governess; she teaches me all my lessons, except dancing, music, and drawing, and for these I have masters."

I forgot to state, that the Marchioness had a lady present at this interview, to whom she turned with significant glances at each of my responses to the queries put to me; and who replied to them with an ominous shake of the head, or a murmur between a sigh and a groan.

"And who stays with you while you take your lessons?" resumed Lady Rocktower.

"Mamma. I always have my masters, early in the morning, before papa is up, and mamma rises early to be present."

The two ladies exchanged mournful glances and sighed aloud.

"Poor child!" ejaculated the Marchioness; and "Poor child!" echoed her companion.

"And who came with you in the carriage here; for you surely were not suffered to come alone?"

"Mamma came with me to the door, and I so wished her to come in! but she would not," answered I, artlessly.

"How mean! how unworthy! what a want of spirit! to come to a door, which she knows never shall be open to her," broke forth the Marchioness.

"Yes, very mean, quite dreadful!" repeated the other lady, piously casting up her eyes to the ceiling.

"Who is mean and dreadful?" asked I, with a strong suspicion that these insulting terms, though totally inapplicable, were by them meant to apply to Lady Walsingham.

"You must not ask questions, my dear," replied the Marchioness, "it is very rude and ill-bred to do so."

"Yes, very rude and ill-bred," repeated her echo.

"Are you very happy at home? Speak the truth, you may tell me; I am, you know, your own aunt, my poor dear child."

"I always speak the truth," answered I, reddening with indignation. "Mamma taught me always to speak the truth."

"It quite wounds my feelings, to hear her call that person, Mamma," said Lady Rocktower. "Oh! if my lost niece could have imagined it, she who loved *him* so much! It is indeed dreadful to think of the selfishness of men."

"Very dreadful!" repeated the other lady.

"But you have not told me whether you are happy at home, my poor child," whined Lady Rocktower, with a piteous face, and a dolorous tone of voice; prematurely prepared to condole on the confession of misery, which her malice had imagined.

"Happy?" repeated I, "Oh, ever so happy!"

"Poor child, she is told to say this," exclaimed Lady Rocktower, in a voice that was meant to be a whisper, but which, owing to her deafness, was louder than she intended.

"Doubtless she is!" groaned her friend, again casting her eyes up to the group of painted Cupids on the ceiling, who seemed maliciously to smile at the antiquated dames beneath.

"I was *not* told to say so," cried I, angrily; "I always speak the truth—I *am* happy at home, and have a fond kind papa and mamma;" and tears came into my eyes.

The two ladies exchanged glances again, which glances seemed to say that one of them had gone too far in her comments.

"I only meant, my love, that all children, who have had the misfortune to lose a mother, that is, an *own,* real mother, cannot be so happy as—as if they had *not* lost her," said my grand aunt, trying with all her might to look mournful.

"Yes, they cannot be so happy as if they had *not* lost her," echoed the toady.

"But you, I suppose," resumed the Marchioness, "do not at all remember your own mother; you, unhappy child, were so young when she died. What a dreadful blow that was to me!"

"A dreadful blow, indeed," groaned the echo.

"I wrote to offer to go to Walsingham Castle, to nurse her during her last illness, though at that period I was anxiously watching the progress of Mr. Vernon's, the celebrated oculist, treatment of the cataract in the eyes of my poor dear Jacko; a treatment which, alas! terminated so fatally. The poor dear creature sank under it! That was, indeed, a heavy affliction."

"Yes, a very heavy affliction, indeed," responded the parasite.

"Who was Jacko?" asked I.

"What! did you never hear your father speak of Jacko?" demanded Lady Rocktower, in a tone of the utmost surprise.

"Never," answered I.

"What hearts some people have!" groaned her ladyship.

"What hearts, indeed!" repeated her companion.

"Mrs. Lancaster, be so good as to bring me the miniature of my niece; it is on the table in my dressing-room; and bring, also, the portrait of my poor dear Jacko, which is by it."

Mrs. Lancaster bustled off with an activity really surprising for one of her years, and unwieldly size; and quickly returned with the picture.

"Look here, my dear," said Lady Rocktower, "this is the portrait of your lovely lost mother. I dare say you never saw her picture before."

"I have one just like this, in a locket," answered I, "with mamma's hair at the back, and I see her portrait every day in the library, and in the drawing-room."

"How unfeeling!" interrupted Lady Rocktower, which was, like all her phrases, echoed.

"And I have a large picture of her in my school-room," resumed I proudly, "which my second mamma had hung up there for me."

"How artful!" murmured the Marchioness.

"How artful!" reiterated Mrs. Lancaster.

"What is artful?" demanded I.

"You must not ask questions, it is very ill-bred to do so," was the reply of my grand aunt, and, "Yes, very ill-bred, indeed," was again murmured forth from the lips of her companion. The portrait of Jacko was not in the place where it was supposed to have been; and I did not request Lady Rocktower to have it sought for, lest I should be told that I was ill-bred.

At length, the carriage was announced; and I bade farewell to my grand aunt, leaving, probably, as unfavourable an impression of me on her mind, as mine retained of her. I scarcely need add, that I received no more invitations to visit her, for her curiosity had been satisfied, and her malevolence disappointed.

What a relief did it seem to throw myself into Lady Walsingham's arms, which I did the moment I entered the carriage.

"Oh! dear mamma, never send me to see that disagreeable old lady any more. I don't like her at all, indeed I don't; nor that other fat old woman that repeats every word Lady Rocktower says."

How affectionate were the tones, in which I was told that I must never dislike any one, but more especially my relations; and how firmly, but gently, was I checked when I commenced repeating the questions that were asked of me, and the comments that were so improperly made in my presence. Young as I was, an impression that Lady Rocktower disliked my stepmother, had taken possession of my mind; and I resented it by entertaining for her ladyship a similar sentiment.

My father, though he questioned me not, checked not my communications relative to this visit, when mamma was absent from the library; and embraced me fondly, when he heard my artless remarks, all so indicative of my grateful affection for Lady Walsingham.

"Who was Jacko, papa," asked I, "of whom Lady Rocktower was so fond?"

"A huge monkey, and by far the most detestable animal I ever had the misfortune to come in contact with," was the answer. "He once hit my hand severely, because I prevented him from attacking you, when your nurse took you to my aunt's; and she was highly indignant at my chastising him, seeming to think her monkey of much more importance than my child."

This anecdote, completed my dislike of her ladyship, which not even the bequest of her fortune to me some ten years after, could eradicate.

When I visited the female relatives on the paternal side, they all, and each, discovered that I was exceedingly like my father's family. I was, as they asserted, a true Walsingham, and not at all like my mother's family, which they seemed to consider as a piece of singular good fortune.

My father having heard from me the observation made by Lady Rocktower of the meanness, the unworthiness, of driving to a door that would never open to receive the presumptuous loiterer on the outside of it, fully understood its malice; and prohibited Lady Walsingham from accompanying me on any of my future visits. Her female attendant, a most respectable young person, far superior to the generality of *femmes de chambre,* ever afterwards escorted me on these occasions; and I then heard not a few comments on the insolence and pride of some people, who so soon forget themselves, that they forsooth were too fine to continue to enact the parts, by the performance of which, they had elevated themselves from their original obscurity.

Never did I observe a single symptom of pique or discontent evince itself in my amiable stepmother, at the conduct of my father's relatives. The fulfilment of her duties appeared to be the source whence her enjoyments were derived. The comfort of my father, and the improvement and happiness of myself, were the constant objects of her attention; and such was the sweetness of her temper, and the winning gentleness and cheerfulness of her manners, that her society diffused a general happiness.

Time rolled on: and at the period I completed my sixteenth year, no where could be found a family more fondly united; or, between the members of which, a better understanding invariably subsisted. Her brother was the only member of her family who frequented our house; for she, with a delicate perception of my poor father's dislike to an extensive circle of visitors, never obtruded her relations upon him; though her correspondence with, and presents to them, were frequent.

A liberal provision had been made for them, by my father on his marriage; and her brother, who was now in possession of the living which had accrued to him through the same source, was, I have stated, an occasional inmate of our mansion, whenever his duties permitted his absence from his flock. Nature never formed a finer model of manly beauty, than Frederick Melville, and the heart was worthy of the shrine. His presence never failed to bestow increased cheerfulness on our family

party. My father entertained a strong partiality for him, which was displayed in many a costly gift dispatched to the parsonage, as well as in the marked gratification his society conferred. Lady Walsingham loved him, as only a sister can love an only brother, ere he has experienced a warmer, and less pure attachment; and I—loved him, with all the wild idolatry of a passionate heart, now first awakened from its childish slumber, yet still unconscious of the nature of the sentiment that animated it.

Many are those of my sex, who might have passed the first years of youth, without a knowledge of the passion they more frequently *imagine,* than *feel,* had they not acquired its rudiments from female companions, or the perusal of novels; somewhat in the same manner as hypochondriacs suppose themselves to experience the diseases of which they either hear or read. The ephemeral fancies, young ladies dignify with the appellation of love, no more resemble the real sentiment, than do the imaginary maladies resemble those for which they are mistaken: but the effects of both are equally dangerous. Many a girl has madly rushed into a marriage, believing herself as madly in love, who has had to deplore her infatuation through a long life of consequent penance; and many a *malade imaginaire* has sank under the real results of a supposed visionary disease.

Mine, was not a precocious passion forced into life by such unhealthy or extraneous excitements. I had never read of, or conversed on the subject, till long after its wild dreams haunted my pillow, and its engrossing tenderness filled my heart. Well do I remember the suffering I endured, when Frederick Melville first began to replace the unceremonious familiarity with which he had been wont to treat me, during my childhood, by a more reserved, and deferential manner. Filled with alarm, I demanded of Lady Walsingham how I had offended her brother, for he no longer behaved to me as formerly?

"Remember, my dear Arabella, that you are no longer a child," replied she; "and that therefore he would err, if he continued to treat you as one."

I felt a gleam of pleasure at this acknowledgement of my being no longer a child. The truth was, I had never been treated as one, consequently no change was visible in the manners of those with whom I lived; hence, I was not as sensible of my approach to womanhood, as

those young persons are, who impatiently await their emancipation from the nursery schoolroom, and its roast mutton and rice pudding dinners.

"I am sure," said I, and the tears filled my eyes, "if people cease to like me, or to show their affection, because I am no longer a child, I shall regret my infancy, and wish to resume it. But *you,* have not changed your manner towards me, neither has my father; why then should Mr. Melville? I am sure, dear mother, though your good nature prompts you to conceal the fact, that this change in his manner has occurred because he no longer likes me as he did."

And my tears flowed afresh.

The anxiety Lady Walsingham's countenance displayed, though she endeavoured to disguise it, convinced me that my suspicions were well founded, and increased my sorrow, in spite of all her efforts to reason me out of it.

When we met at dinner, I remarked that her eyes bore evident traces of tears. Frederick too looked more grave than I had ever seen him; and my poor father, in general, the least talkative of the little circle, was now the most so. He proposed music in the evening, to which we assented, though little disposed; and I played an accompaniment, while Lady Walsingham and her brother sang one of my father's favourite *duos.* The tones of his voice, seemed to sink into my very soul; low, plaintive, and full of rich melody, their deep pathos excited anew the tenderness, already but too much developed in my heart.

The sister and brother, sang only sacred music, to which they had been accustomed from infancy; and their voices were in such perfect harmony, that even the most fastidious critic would have listened to them with delight. For me, no other voices ever possessed the same charm; and I thought I had never heard them breathe forth sounds of such exquisite and softened melancholy, as on that memorable night. The *duo* ended, they paused to hear the accustomed request to repeat it —a minute elapsed—yet no word escaped the lips that had been wont to applaud them.

"Hush! he sleeps," whispered my mother, gently approaching with stealthy steps the easy chair in which my father reclined; but no sooner had she reached it, than a shriek of horror burst from her lips, and she fell insensible at his feet.

We rushed to the spot—oh God! never shall I forget the agony of that moment! Even now, after the lapse of more than half a century, the scene seems present to my imagination.

My father, my dear, kind, indulgent father, was a corse!—the vital spark was extinct for ever, and his gentle spirit had passed away without a groan. Though years, long years, have since elapsed, leaving many a furrow on my brow, and inflicting many a pang on my heart, that fearful evening, has never been effaced from my memory. Then was the golden veil of youth, that had lent to life its brightness first rudely rent asunder. Then came, for the first tune, the soul-harrowing conviction of the uncertainly of life, and the brevity of its blessings; a conviction that destroys the confidence in happiness, which forms so considerable a part of the happiness itself. Alas! the dear object of so much affection was now a cold and lifeless corse! snatched from us without a word of warning, without even a farewell look. I could not at first believe the fatal truth. No! he could not be gone for ever—he could not thus have left us; and I clasped my arms around the neck which they had so often entwined, and pressed my lips to that dear face, calling him by every fond and tender name to which my frantic affection could give utterance; until, exhausted by my agony, I sank, powerless as an infant, into the arms of my attendant, and lost, in temporary insensibility, my sense of the overwhelming affliction that had befallen me.

Never shall I forget the awaking from that sleep: the dim, vague recollection of some terrible event, slowly making itself understood to my bewildered mind; then, the shudder of intense agony, with which the fatal truth stood revealed, and the unutterable pangs which it renewed in me. No! such a lesson, though only one among many of those which all must learn, can never be effaced from the mind.

The shock had produced a nervous fever, under which I languished for several days, totally helpless; yet, with a full, an overpowering consciousness of the loss I had experienced. Lady Walsingham never left my bed side. Hers was the gentle hand that smoothed my pillow, and gave the cooling beverage to my fevered lip; hers the sweet voice that whispered mild entreaties to me to be comforted, even while the tremulousness of its tones betrayed how little she had acquired the difficult task of conquering her own grief.

Doctor Warminster attended me through this malady, with an affectionate interest never surpassed; all the friendship he had so long entertained for my lost parent, seemed transferred to my stepmother and self; and our chief source of consolation was derived from the assurance he so frequently gave us, that the life of the dear departed had been prolonged far beyond the doctor's hopes, by the calm and cheerful mode in which it had been passed, owing to the indefatigable care, and delicate attentions, of all those around him.

My poor father had a disease of one of the arteries of the heart, which had declared itself soon after my birth; and any sudden or violent emotion might have produced a fatal result at any moment. This was the cause of his sedentary existence and had eventually terminated it; but the awful fiat found him in readiness to meet it. For years he knew, that though in the midst and zenith of life, he might be instantaneously summoned to leave it; and he prepared himself for the event with the calmness of a philosopher, and the resignation of a Christian. Now it was that I first learned that an imprudent disclosure of his disease, made to my poor mother by Lady Theodosia Walsingham, shortly after her last accouchement of a son, who lived but a few hours, had given her such a shock as to lead to a total derangement of health, which conducted her to the grave, in a few months. Dr. Warminster feared then, that the extreme grief of my poor father would occasion his death. But the dying entreaties of my mother, that he would not give way to regret, but live for their child, triumphed over the selfish indulgence of his sorrow; though he never ceased to remember her, whose dread of losing him, had consigned her to an early grave.

He determined to do all that could prolong life for my sake; and, contrary to a resolution formed over the deathbed of my mother, never to give her a successor, married to secure me the society of Miss Melville, when he found it was considered essential to my happiness. Never was a husband and father more sincerely mourned, than was my dear parent; and never did a human being more deserve to be lamented!

The first time I left my room after this sad catastrophe, my mind softened by grief, and my frame weakened by illness, I saw Frederick Melville. He, too, had deeply shared the general regret, for he was truly attached to his patron; and the awful suddenness of the blow rendered it

more painful. When he took my hand, his own trembled; and the extreme palor of my face, seemed to shock him.

"You will not now be cold and distant to me, Frederick," said I, while tears streamed down my cheeks, "when I have no longer any one but my mother and you to love me."

He pressed my hand gently, and assured me, that he had never felt otherwise than warmly interested in my happiness; and that I wronged him, if I doubted his affectionate friendship. These words reassured me —for how little does it require to nourish hope in a youthful breast?— and the softened kindness of his manner, even still more than his words, tranquilized my feelings.

My dear father had bequeathed a handsome competency to each member of the Melville family, and a large dower to Lady Walsingham, who, with her brother, was named my guardian. The unentailed estates, and personal property to a large amount, were willed to me, charged with provisions to the old servants, and a considerable bequest to good Doctor Warminster. A thousand vague hopes sprang up in my mind at finding I was thus in a manner linked with Frederick Melville. I was pleased at being, for more than four years, as it were, dependent on him, and felt that I would gladly prolong the dependence for life.

"You are now one of the richest heiresses in England, my lady," said good Mrs. Mary to me one day, presuming that her long services licensed her to be more communicative than English servants generally are. "Your ladyship will marry some great rich lord, I am sure, and perhaps I may see you a duchess."

"You will see no such thing, I can tell you," answered I, angry even at the supposition. "I am already rich, and of ancient family. Why, then, should I marry for the ridiculous purpose of obtaining that which I already possess? Why may I not marry to please myself, and so make some one I love, rich and distinguished."

"Lord, my lady, sure your ladyship would never go to demean yourself by marrying some one as is not somebody. Every rich and grand lady likes to marry some one that is richer and grander than herself, if possible, for *then* she can be sure she is married for *real* love; whereas, my lady, if she marries some one as is a nobody, she can never know but what he married her only *because* she *was* a great and rich lady—and that thought would be very vexatious to a woman's mind."

I stole a glance at the mirror opposite, and the face I there beheld told me that *I* might hope to be loved for myself, even though I was a rich heiress. I suppose good Mrs. Mary, who wanted none of the sagacity of her sex and class, guessed what was passing in my mind, for she immediately added,

"To be sure, when ladies are as handsome as your ladyship, they will always be sure to have lovers in plenty, even if they had no fortune; but still, if I was a great rich heiress, though ever so beautiful, I would be afraid to marry a poor gentleman, from the notion that afterwards the suspicion would be coming into my head that my money had some share in making him propose for me."

Mean and unworthy as this thought was, a thought that never would have entered my head, had it not been presented through the medium of Mrs. Mary, it now made a disagreeable impression on me; and I began to think that to be "a great rich heiress," as Mary called it, was not after all, so desirable a position as I had been disposed to think it. How much evil finds access to youthful minds through conversing with servants; the very best of whom are, by the want of education, and the narrowness of their ideas, totally incapacitated from communicating other than mean and selfish thoughts.

I now began to look on myself as one who would be an object of general attraction, and I became inflated with pride; but there was something so peculiarly dignified, as well as gentle, in the manners of Lady Walsingham and her brother, that no opportunity of evincing this new defect offered. Nothing could exceed the affectionate attention of my stepmother; it seemed rather increased than diminished since the melancholy change in our family; as if she would repay to his child the debt of gratitude she owed to my father.

The conduct of Frederick was uniformly kind; but still there was a degree of reserve, if not coldness, in it, that was far from satisfactory to me. He had prolonged his stay at the earnest desire of his sister; but the period now drew near when he must return to his living, and I counted the days in which I had yet to enjoy his society, as those only count them who love for the first time. Lady Walsingham had a portrait taken of him by an eminent artist, who succeeded in rendering it an admirable likeness. The morning on which it was sent home, that desire to speak of the object of our affection, which is one of the peculiar characteristics of

the passion that had obtained possession of my young heart, tempted me to ask Mrs. Mary "whether she had seen Mr. Melville's picture?"

"Yes, my lady, I have; and extremely like it is. Mr. Melville is a very handsome gentleman;" (and she looked narrowly at me) "and much resembles Lady Walsingham. I was sure her ladyship would have his picture taken."

"Why so, Mistress Mary?" asked I.

"Oh don't you remember, my lady, how her ladyship, that is before she was her ladyship, or perhaps ever expected to be, when she was going away back to her mother's, had her picture taken, and left with your ladyship?"

"Yes, I remember very well; it was I who made her sit for it."

"Well, then, my lady, if that picture had not been made, I think your ladyship would have got used to Miss Melville's absence; you would not have had that bad illness; my poor dear lord would not have taken you down to the country, nor have married my lady. It all came of that picture."

And here, good Mistress Mary put on a most lugubrious countenance, and sighed deeply.

"I shall always rejoice then at having had the picture made," answered I, more than half offended at the implied censure Mistress Mary's observation and sigh conveyed. "But what can all this gossiping of yours have to do with Mr. Melville's portrait?"

"Why, your ladyship must be conscious that as the brother is as handsome as the sister, some rich young lady may see the picture; then, perhaps, see *him*; then, fall in love with, and marry him; so that he may have as much good luck as my Lady Walsingham had."

I felt my cheeks glow at this palpable insinuation; I was angry with Mary for presuming to convey it, and yet, unworthy as I was, I fancied that the portrait *might* have been taken with an intention of keeping his image before me. Strange as it may appear, I wished Frederick Melville to love me, ay, passionately wished it; desired too, that he would demand my hand, and yet I desired to find in him that consciousness of the difference between our positions, which should render his love so timid as to require an act of heroic generosity on my part, to give him the hand he fondly aspired to, but dared not demand. A whole romance was

formed in my head, though as yet I had never perused one; but love is a magician that can work strange marvels.

While these thoughts were passing in my mind, good Mistress Mary was fidgetting about my dressing-table, anxious to resume the subject, which my abstraction had interrupted.

"I would not be at all surprised, my lady," commenced Mary, "if some rich heiress were to fall in love with Mr. Melville; for he is indeed as handsome a gentleman as ever I saw," (I felt better disposed towards her) "and so sensible and steady too. Well, all I hope is that if such a thing should happen, it will take place before he has ever been in love with any one else, for it's a cruel thing, my lady, to have either man or woman crossed in love. And though people may be tempted by grandeur and riches to give up their first sweetheart, still they must have an unhappy mind whenever they think of it: and some persons do say, but, for God's sake, your ladyship, don't go for to get me into trouble by repeating it—they do say that Lady Walsingham broke the heart of as handsome a young gentleman as any in Sussex, to marry my poor dear lord."

"Is it possible?" demanded I, forgetting in my awakened curiosity the indecorum I was committing, in thus questioning a servant, relative to the widow of my father, the kindest, truest friend, save him, I ever knew.

"Oh! indeed, my lady, it's all true; I saw the young gentleman myself when we were down staying at Cuckfield, looking even then as pale as a sheet, and Mrs. Bateman as keeps the George Inn, told me the whole story."

"But, perhaps, Mary, Lady Walsingham never loved the young gentleman you saw, though he was in love with her."

"Lord, bless your heart, my lady, the whole village knew as how they were sweethearts, and engaged to be married, and as loving as two turtle doves. But when Miss Melville come to Lonon, and seed this fine house, and all the grandeur of being a lady, she took to pleasing your ladyship so much that your little ladyship couldn't abide nobody else; and pleased, too, his poor dear lordship, as is no more, till he thought there was no one like her. And then, when she pleased your ladyship and his lordship until neither of ye could live without her, then she gets that beautiful picture taken; and off she goes, guessing pretty well, I'll be sworn, that she'd be soon sent for to come back. And so Mrs. Bateman

said, when I told her all about her pleasing my lord and my little lady so much, and about the picture."

Mistress Mary's tongue, thus encouraged, ran on glibly, and I was in no humour to check it. The truth is, though I blush, old as I am, while making this avowal, the artful tale, thus related, had made an impression on me.

"And so, my lady," continued Mary, "Mrs. Bateman says to me, 'Mistress Mary,' says she, 'it may be all very well for Miss Melville to be made a countess, and to walk in the coronation with a gold crown on her head, side by side, cheek by jowl, as the saying is, with the grandest in all England. But will *that* comfort her? when she knows the green grass is growing over the grave of her true love, who died all for her marrying another. Oh! Mistress Mary,' says Mrs. Bateman, '*I* know what it is to cross a first love, for all you would not think it now, because I'm so changed; but when Mister Bateman came a courting to me, there was another lad, a widow's son, with whom I had broken a tester, and taken many a moonlight walk.'"

A summons from Lady Walsingham interrupted the sequel of Mrs. Bateman's love story, to the evident discomposure of its narrator, who appeared unconscious how little interest the adventures of the hostess of the George Inn excited in my mind.

"I sent for you, dear Arabella," said my step-mother, "to consult you about a change I wish to be made in Frederick's portrait. It looks too cold, too severe, and I should like the expression to be softened. What do you think?"

Trifling as this appeal to me was, it bore such a curious coincidence with Mrs. Mary's observations and surmises that it struck me as being a convincing proof of their justice; and I felt chilled, if not disgusted, by this seeming cunning. Wayward and wicked that I was! to allow the low suspicions of a menial to prejudice me against one whose whole conduct towards me and my father, ought to have left no room in my breast for aught save implicit confidence: and boundless gratitude! But such is the inherent evil of some natures, that an ill founded assertion, even from an unworthy source, can efface the remembrance of years of experienced goodness.

"You do not tell me what you think, Arabella," resumed Lady Walsingham, as I stood, lost in abstraction.

"I like the picture very well as it is at present," answered I, somewhat coldly, "and your brother, as a clergyman, ought not to look as gay as a fine gentleman."

"You mistake, my dear Arabella," rejoined Lady Walsingham, "I do not wish the portrait to look gay; *that* would not be in character with the profession of the original; but a soft gravity, that is a seriousness, devoid of severity, would please me better."

"Did you ever see so handsome a young man as your brother, mother?" asked I, urged by an instinct of irrepressible curiosity; and I looked stedfastly and scrutinizingly in her face.

She positively turned as pale as marble, faltered for a moment, and then answered—"Your interrogation is strange; but I did once know a young man whom I thought quite as handsome;" and she sighed deeply.

"Who was he, may I inquire?" asked I.

"He was a neighbour of ours in Sussex," replied Lady Walsingham, "but he is now no more."

The ashy paleness of her face, ought to have silenced my unfeeling curiosity: but it did not.

"When did he die, mother?" again demanded I.

"The year I last left my maternal home," was the answer, and it was received by me as 'proof strong as holy writ' of the truth of all Mistress Mary's statement.

My stepmother was no longer the pure, the disinterested, high-minded woman I had from infancy imagined her to be. She stood before me shorn of her beams, a cold, calculating, ambitious person, rending asunder the fond ties of love, to wed with one she only meanly and selfishly preferred in consequence of his rank and fortune. I saw in her, the destroyer of him who loved her even unto death; and the designing plotter, who was now bent on accomplishing for her brother, the same fortunate destiny she had achieved for herself. At this moment, Frederick Melville entered, and for the first time, I beheld him without pleasure. My mind was soured, and my imagination chilled, by the unworthy suspicions that had taken possession of it. Not that I had determined to resist his suit, whenever he might proffer it: oh! no, my affection was too rooted for such an effort of self-control; though it was not sufficiently strong or noble, to resist suspicion. But I determined to torment the brother and sister, for a brief space, and alarm their cupidity,

or ambition, by the display of an indifference which I was far from feeling; and, when I had sufficiently tortured them, I would graciously extend the olive branch, and bestow on my terrified lover, the hand I believed he was passionately longing to possess, but durst not demand.

How strange is the human heart! here was I, a woman, and a vain woman, too, who would have resented with anger any doubt expressed of the personal attractions I believed mine, now acting, as if my wealth and station were my sole charms; yet wanting the self-respect or dignity that ought under such a belief to have impelled me to a totally different conduct.

When, however, Frederick Melville took his leave, without having, by either a look or word, expressed any thing more than a friendly interest towards me, I felt deeply mortified; and unbidden tears, shed in the solitude of my chamber, proved that though absent, he was not forgotten. How did I now blame myself, for having, as I imagined, by my coldness restrained the expression of Frederick's attachment. What would I not have given for one more interview with him, in which I might, by a renewal of former kindness, have elicited some symptom, if not declaration of the attachment, of which I so ardently longed to be assured; and which now, that it was withheld, appeared doubly essential to my happiness. How often did I find my eyes dwelling involuntarily on the portrait! and yet not half so frequently as my thoughts reverted to the dear original. The chairs and sofas on which I had seen him seated, the inanimate objects that decorated the saloons, which I had heard him commend, all were now invested with a tender interest in my imagination. A rose, which he had presented to me many months before, I had carefully preserved between the leaves of a book; and never did a day elapse without my looking at it, nay more, pressing its faded and withered leaves to my lips. Ah! none but a woman's heart can ever feel as mine did then, when in solitude and silence, occupied solely by one dear image, I created a bright world of mine own, nor dreamt that *he* who lent it all its rainbow hues, would ere long shroud it, in sadness and gloom.

Lady Walsingham rarely mentioned her brother's name to me, and when I introduced it, seemed more disposed to change the topic than to expatiate on it. But even this reserve on her part appeared to my prejudiced mind, as the effect of artifice; and I inwardly smiled at my detection of it. Yet there were moments, too, when looking on her fair

and open brow, where candour seemed to have set its seal, that, struck with her resemblance to Frederick, I longed to throw myself into her arms, and confess how dear he was to me. But a sense of modesty, that guardian angel of female youth, checked the impulse; and sent me again to the solitude of my chamber, there to murmur his name, and breathe those sighs which are half hope, half prayer, and which never yet emanated but from a young female heart.

My frequent abstractions, and pensiveness, Lady Walsingham attributed, or seemed to attribute, wholly to regret for my dear father. She would dwell for hours on his virtues, in commendation of which she was eloquent; and even to my prejudiced mind, her praises carried conviction of the sincerity that dictated them.

The seclusion in which we lived, nourished the affection that had usurped my breast—there it reigned despotic sovereign; and though I deeply, truly mourned the dear parent I had lost, I mourned not as those do, who have no engrossing passion to whisper hopes, that in spite of tender regret for the past, can make the future bright and cheering. There is no magician like Love—he had now spread his witcheries around me, and I saw all, through the brilliant medium of his spells.

The year of mourning passed slowly away. We had now been some months without a visit from Frederick, and his sister continued the same system of reserve, avoiding as much as possible all mention of him. This system increased, instead of diminishing my attachment: I became pensive, and abstracted, my health began to suffer, and Lady Walsingham consulted Doctor Warminster. He, good man, was inclined to attribute my indisposition to the extreme seclusion in which we lived; he advised more air, more exercise, more society, and dwelt on the necessity of amusement being taken into our scheme of cure. Cheerfully, did my affectionate stepmother enter into all his views, though solitude would have been more congenial to her own taste. Still, I did not become better; and the good doctor began to be alarmed. I observed that Lady Walsingham and he had frequent consultations, and that she daily grew more pensive. She gave up sitting in the room in which Frederick's portrait was placed, though that had been, hitherto, her favourite apartment; and this change I felt as an unkindness, the motive of which I attributed to a desire of still more exciting my attachment to him, by thus seemingly opposing it.

One day, while Dr. Warminster was feeling my pulse, he suddenly asked Lady Walsingham, when her brother was to be in town. I felt my heart throb at the question, and I suppose my pulse indicated its effect; for the doctor looked more grave than ever, and cast a significant glance at my stepmother, who answered that she did not expect him soon. That night while undressing, I observed that Mistress Mary seemed big with some intelligence, which she only wanted a word of encouragement to communicate. Latterly, a sense of propriety had induced me to check her loquacity, by avoiding asking her any questions; but now impelled by a vague curiosity, I led her to divulge the news she was anxious to promulgate.

"And so, your ladyship of course has heard as how my lady's brother, is soon to change his condition," said Mary.

Now, strange as it may appear, this figure or phrase of Mary's, of "changing condition," though a frequent and favourite one with persons of her class, I had never heard before; and imagined it to mean a change of position, or residence.

"No, indeed," said I, "I have heard nothing on the subject."

"Well, to be sure, how sly, and secret, some people can be," resumed Mistress Mary. "Perhaps they think that after all, he may be got to break his sweetheart's heart, the same as others broke theirs; and be the cause of their being sent to the grave, as that poor young gentleman in Sussex was. But he is a clergyman, and has the fear of God before his eyes; and so, will remain true and constant to his sweetheart, of which I'm glad enough, for though he is a very handsome and a very good young gentleman, I would not like to see a great rich heiress, and a lady of title too, demean herself by marrying a poor parson."

"Why, what do you, what can you mean?" demanded I impatiently.

"Nothing at all your ladyship, but that the Rev. Mr. Melville is a-going to be married to a Miss Lattimer, a great beauty they say, with whom he fell in love at Cambridge."

I was so wholly unprepared for this intelligence, that it fell on me like a painful shock. I neither screamed, nor fainted, though I felt nearly ready to drop from my chair; but I became so deathly pale, that Mistress Mary grew alarmed; and poured out a glass of water, of which I swallowed a portion, saying that I had a sudden spasm.

I dismissed Mary as soon as possible; for I longed to be alone, that I might, free from the restraint of a witness, give way to the agony that was destroying me.

Never shall I forget that night! when the rich heiress, the spoilt child of fortune, who thought she had only to express a wish, to have it instantly gratified, first discovered that she loved in vain; that *he,* on whom she had lavished all the idolatry of her first affection, preferred another, and would soon be lost to her for ever. Fearful was the conflict in my mind, as through the long night, I counted hour after hour, sleep still refusing to visit my tear-stained lids. I wept in intolerable anguish, the destruction of all my air-built hopes, my fairy dreams of happiness, my pride, my love, my delicacy, all rankling beneath the deep wounds inflicted on them. And *he,* on whom I doted, even while I thought, dreamt but of him, he was wholly occupied by another, totally regardless of me! There was bitterness, there was agony in the thought!

Then came the reflection, that I had been deceived, yes deceived, and duped; and I unjustly, ungratefully condemned Lady Walsingham for not having told me of her brother's love for another. Now were Mistress Mary's insinuations explained; Lady Walsingham had long known of her brother's attachment, and hoped to induce him to conquer it, and, like her, to sacrifice love to ambition. How unworthy! and yet while admitting the unworthiness, I was weak enough to wish that her endeavours and hopes, had been crowned with success; and that I, on any condition, had become the wife of him I so fondly, passionately loved. Then came the humiliating doubt of my own personal attractions; a doubt fraught with tenfold chagrin to one who had hitherto believed herself supremely handsome.

"Oh! why," exclaimed I, in a paroxysm of tears, "why was I not born beautiful enough to attract, to win him from my rival! What avails my wealth, my station, and all the boasted advantages I am said to possess, when they could not attain for me the only heart I desire to make mine; the only being on whom my eyes can ever dwell with rapture!

My mind was in a piteous state, agitated by various and contending emotions; one moment governed by jealous rage, and the next, subdued to melting softness, by the recollections of past days. Then came the unjust belief, that I had been deceived, wronged, by my stepmother. She

must have known that he loved another—why then allow me to indulge the dangerous illusion that he ever could be any thing to me?

How prone are we to blame others, when we ourselves only are in fault. I really now felt angry with Lady Walsingham, and visited on her the censure that could only apply to myself. I thought of my dear lost father, and my tears streamed afresh, when I reflected that had he been spared to me, how would he have sympathised in this my first, and cruel disappointment; he, whose indulgent fondness had ever shielded me from sorrow. Now was it, that the fatal system of indulgence, hitherto so injudiciously pursued towards me, met its punishment; for in proportion to the facility afforded to the gratification of my wishes up to this period, was the bitterness with which this disappointment was endured.

The morning found me ill, mentally and physically ill. My swoln eyes, and pale cheek alarmed Mistress Mary, and her report quickly brought my stepmother to my bed-side To her anxious inquiries, she met only tears and sullenness; but though evidently surprised at my ungraciousness, it extorted no look or expression of anger, or impatience from her. Doctor Warminster was sent for, and he, having administered a composing draught, seated himself by my bed-side, to watch its effects. His gentleness soothed, while it rendered me ashamed of my own petulance; and in answer to his repeated interrogatories, I at length admitted that something had occurred to give me pain.

"But why, my dear child, for so you must permit me to call you, do you evince an unkindness to Lady Walsingham, so unusual, and, I must add, so unmerited. This is not amiable, it is not grateful, towards one who is so fondly, so sincerely devoted to you. If you were acquainted with the total abnegation of self, the uncomplaining patience, with which your stepmother has borne the most cruel disappointment that can befal a female heart, a disappointment where an affection of the tenderest nature had existed, you would, I am sure, feel an increased respect and regard for her; and avoid even the semblance of ingratitude for the years of solicitude, and never-ceasing attention, you have experienced from her."

"If she have experienced a disappointment of the heart," answered I, sullenly, "whose is the fault? Did she not, with cold and calculating selfishness, break the bonds that united her to the lover of her choice, in

order to become a countess, and to acquire the wealth in which he was deficient?"

The good doctor's face assumed an expression of severity, mingled with surprise, that somewhat moderated the expression of my ill humour.

"Who can have been so wicked, and so unjust, as to have invented this falsehood, to impose on your credulity?" demanded he indignantly.

"Was not Lady Walsingham engaged to marry a young gentleman in Sussex? and did she not break through her engagement, in order to wed my father? and did not the poor young man die in consequence of the disappointment?' asked I, with the air of one who is convinced of the truth of what she utters.

"It is true, she was engaged to marry a young gentleman in Sussex, to whom her affections had been plighted. But his mother, influenced by the evil and scandalous reports circulated by Lady Theodosia Walsingham, insisted on his breaking off the engagement; and though he, convinced of the innocence of Miss Melville, was willing, nay anxious to brave the displeasure of his only parent, the young lady from a sense of duty, though fondly attached to him, declined to become his wife. When your noble, your generous father, with a view solely to your happiness, made her through me the offer of his hand, she unequivocally declined it; until I urged that your health, nay, perhaps your life, depended on her answer. She made your worthy father acquainted with the real state of her heart; and he honoured her the more for her candour, while acknowledging that his own affections, except for his child, were interred with the wife he had never ceased to love and mourn. A consumption which was hereditary in the family, had previously rendered all hope of the recovery of her rejected lover vain; her acceptance of his hand could not have retarded his death, and her union with your excellent father did not expedite that melancholy event. Lady Walsingham had no reserve with her noble husband; he knew the deep disappointment she had endured, and the regret she never ceased to feel for the object of her youthful attachment. He was fully aware, that not to ambition, but to affection for *you,* did he owe the hand of Lady Walsingham; and he honoured and esteemed her, for the exemplary manner in which, concealing every symptom of sorrow, she devoted her whole thoughts, her whole time, to her husband and his child. And this,

Lady Arabella, is the person you could misjudge, and of whom you could listen to false and evil reports emanating from some malicious calumniator! I must confess, I am shocked by the ingratitude you have evinced."

So was I also; and ashamed, as well as shocked. How did the conduct and motives of my amiable stepmother thus explained to me, make me blush for my own! And yet a latent feeling, a base suspicion, with regard to her reasons for wishing to engage her brother to wed me, still lurked in my mind. The good doctor saw that, though penitent for having believed the tale against my stepmother, my dissatisfaction had not yet entirely subsided, though I forbore to express it.

"I will now, Lady Arabella," continued he, "give you another proof of the disinterested conduct of Lady Walsingham. When your noble father, on your completing your sixteenth year, aware of the precarious tenure of his existence, and anxious to secure for you a protector, imagined that Mr. Melville, from his personal and mental qualifications, might not be an unsuitable husband for you, signified his wishes to Lady Walsingham," (how I felt my heart beat, and my cheeks blush, at this part of the good Doctor's discourse!) "her Ladyship immediately pointed out the disparity of station and fortune between you, and her brother; and urged your claims to a more noble and brilliant alliance. Lord Walsingham, however, who had studied the character of Mr. Melville, feeling persuaded that your happiness might be more secure in a union with him, than in a marriage with one of higher birth, and proportionate opulence, persevered in his desire of the subject being proposed to Mr. Melville, by his sister. Well do I remember the deep regret with which your good father learned that Mr. Melville's affections were engaged, to a young and portionless lady, the daughter of a clergyman, at Cambridge. This discovery was made only the last day of your father's life; and Lady Walsingham, seeing how much it disappointed her noble-minded husband, wept for his sorrow; though she could not do otherwise than respect the disinterestedness of her brother, in adhering to his first choice, notwithstanding the great temptation offered to him."

Now was the delicacy and prudence of my stepmother's conduct entirely revealed, and the reserve of her brother explained. And these were the persons whom I had wronged by my mistrust! whom I had

believed capable of playing a game to secure me, and my fortune! How unworthy did I appear in my own eyes, though my suspicions were happily, as I thought, known only to myself. Mistress Mary, who had been the medium of infusing them into my mind, lost a considerable portion of my favour; for I in this instance acted with the injustice to which so many are prone, that of avenging, on the instrument of their unworthy curiosity and suspicion, the blame which they may have incurred, and almost solely deserve. My vanity too was now less deeply mortified by discovering that Frederick Melville had lost his heart ere I had attained an age to admit of my being a candidate for it. How I longed to behold the woman who was capable of inspiring a passion that could thus resist the temptation that my poor dear father had held out. Then came the thought, that my preference for Frederick Melville had been detected by the fond eyes of my parent, and that it was this detection which led to his offering him my hand. Lady Walsingham, too, had observed the state of my heart, and tried to wean it from its first attachment. My soul was penetrated with a deep sense of the unbounded love of the parent I had lost, and of the delicacy and affection of her, to whose care he had bequeathed me. My sullenness and petulance melted away, like ice beneath the sun, as I reflected on their goodness: and I was no longer the rich heiress, who could command love and condescend to reward it, but the orphan, who was disposed to be grateful for affection, and once more anxious to merit it.

The Doctor saw that a salutary change had occurred in me; and my gentle stepmother was soon made happy by being permitted to lavish on me all the demonstrations of that tenderness which she so truly felt. No word of explanation ever passed between her and me, relative to my disappointment with regard to her brother. With womanly delicacy and tact, she avoided all semblance of knowing my attachment, though the softness of her manners indicated a sympathy, that I was now thoroughly capable of estimating. When I looked on her still beautiful but pensive face, and reflected how courageously she had borne up against the destruction of her youthful hopes of happiness, I was incited to vanquish the regret, that, in spite of my best resolves, still would prey on me. Pride, the besetting sin of my nature, and the most successful adversary that ever coped with love, came to my aid, and assisted me, perhaps still more powerfully than reason, in conquering my girlish

passion. To continue to love one, whose heart was given to another, was mean, was unfeminine; and I half vanquished my weakness in feeling it to be one.

Still I heard nothing of Frederick Melville's marriage. Was it postponed from a fear of my not being able to support it? There was insult in the supposition; and I determined to do all in my power to bring the nuptials to a speedy conclusion.

Seated, one day, in the drawing-room appropriated to Lady Walsingham, and in which hung the portrait of her brother, I made a desperate effort, and asked her when Frederick was to be married. She answered, hesitatingly, that the precise time had never been named.

"Would it not be better, dear mother," said I, "that the marriage took place at once? Theirs has been a long attachment, and all who esteem them must desire to see it rewarded. Would it not be kind to have a miniature copy made of Frederick's portrait?" and I looked at it with a steady gaze, "as a nuptial present to his betrothed: and we, dear mother, must send suitable gifts to the bride."

All this was said so quietly and naturally, that Lady Walsingham saw not how much the effort cost me; but pride instigated it; and what this despot commands he generally supplies his votaries with the power of executing. Lady Walsingham had so little of this leaven of fine natures in hers, that she now began to think that she had been in error when she imagined that I had entertained more than a sentiment of friendship for her brother; and I did all in my power to encourage the delusion. She wrote, therefore, to advise Frederick to have the marriage completed; and, at my request, invited the bride elect and bridegroom, to come to London, that the ceremony might be celebrated beneath our roof. I busied myself in preparing wedding gifts for the bride, and counted the hours until she arrived. I saw that Lady Walsingham occasionally feared that I was playing a part; but so skilfully did I enact it, that at length I deceived even her.

Miss Lattimer and her father arrived. How my heart throbbed when I saw her enter! yet I had sufficient self-control to conceal every symptom of agitation, if I could not subdue the deep emotion. She was exquisitely beautiful. A Madonna countenance, such as the divine Raphael loved to paint, in which softness and modesty lent additional charms to features of the most delicate proportions, and a complexion of unequalled

E. T. Parris *H. Cook*

Miss Lattimer

brilliancy. But why attempt to describe what a portrait of her, painted at my request, so much better explains? Here it is; yet lovely as is the picture, it did not render justice to the fair original. No longer did I wonder that Frederick Melville, for her sake, resisted the temptation offered to him by my wealth: her beauty alone would have justified his choice even to the most fastidious critic of female loveliness; but her gentle sweetness of disposition, and unassuming good sense, enhanced her personal attractions.

When Frederick arrived, no symptom of emotion was visible in the frank and cordial greeting which I gave him; while he, imposed on by the easy cheerfulness of my manner, resumed his ancient cordiality, and unreservedly manifested, in my presence, all the tenderness he felt for his betrothed. The firm resolution to conceal and vanquish an attachment, is an effectual step towards the accomplishment of that difficult task: and the necessity of witnessing the beloved object's demonstrations of affection for another, though a painful, is a still more efficacious remedy.

I accompanied Eliza Lattimer to the altar, and heard him I loved, plight to her those vows which I once hoped—ah! how vainly hoped—might have been pledged to me; and though this effort cost me a pang, and a severe one, I was repaid by the salutary effect which this termination of all hope, this positive and eternal barrier between us, produced. To bestow a thought or a sigh on him who was now, in the sight of God and man, and by his own free will and choice, the husband of another, would have been not only wicked, but mean; and I fear pride, more than reason, or religion, assisted my firm resolve to subdue every trace of my ill-starred attachment.

The new married pair set off for one of my country seats, to spend the honeymoon; and left me, if not happy, at least self-satisfied with the consciousness of having well performed the difficult role I had imposed on myself. My attachment to Lady Walsingham had returned in all its pristine force. A secret sympathy united us; and, though never expressed, its influence was sensibly felt by both. It was perhaps this bond of union that precluded her from discovering the great defect of my character, which was an ungovernable pride; or, at least, it might have prevented her from taking sufficient pains to eradicate or soften it. Hers was too meek a spirit to cope with mine: she shrank from

opposition, and was more prone to lament errors in those she loved, or to avoid all occasion of eliciting their display, than to exert the necessary firmness for combating and triumphing over them.

I soon saw this sole weakness in her otherwise faultless character; and availed myself of my knowledge of it to acquire an undisputed empire over her. An increased delicacy of health, of which I had lately shown symptoms, alarmed the sensitive affection of Lady Walsingham: and Doctor Warminster, on being consulted, recommended that the effect of milder climate should be tried for the approaching winter. I eagerly acceded to the proposal, and in a short time after, my stepmother and I, attended by a numerous suite, left England, for Italy.

I pass over the surprise and pleasure, which our stay in the French capital, during the first few weeks, afforded me. I was of an age when every novelty charms; and I was travelling with a person whose sole study was to increase my stock of enjoyments.

While at Paris, we met, at the English ambassador's, the Marquis of Clydesdale, a young man remarkable for personal attractions, and not less so for an amiability of manner and general information, that rendered his society peculiarly agreeable to, and universally sought after, by his compatriots. An expression of seriousness, amounting almost to melancholy, pervaded the countenance of Lord Clydesdale, and, in my opinion, lent it an additional interest; and an occasional pensiveness and abstraction detracted not from this feeling. I found myself unconsciously comparing the countenance of Lord Clydesdale with that of one still remembered, though no longer loved; and I was compelled to own, that, for intellectual expression, that of his lordship possessed the superiority. The air noble and *distingué,* peculiar to, and only to be acquired by good company, was strikingly conspicuous in Lord Clydesdale; and gave a dignified ease to his movements, that impressed the beholders with a conviction that he was no ordinary person.

We had met three or four times after our introduction, and had only exchanged a few casual words of commonplace civility; until one day at a dinner at the Ambassador's, happening to be placed next him at table, we insensibly fell into conversation. We soon discovered that we were about to spend the winter at the same place, in Italy; and this circumstance led to his giving me many interesting details of that country, where he had already sojourned some two or three years

before. The originality and justice of his remarks, and the unpretending frankness and simplicity with which they were made, impressed me highly in his favour. Perhaps they owed something of their charm, to the handsome countenance, and dignified bearing of him who uttered them; for my youthful predilection for beauty still influenced me, more than I was willing to admit, even to myself.

The next day saw the Marquis of Clydesdale a visitor at our hotel; and each succeeding one, marked the progress of an intimacy that was gradually formed between us. He lent me books, conducted Lady Walsingham and myself to the studios of the different artists of merit, and attached himself to us, at the various *soirées* at which we met.

I soon became accustomed to his presence; nay, more, when he was absent I experienced a void in our circle, that the society of no other man, however amiable, could fill up. I found myself impatiently expecting his arrival, at the hour he was in the habit of coming; and felt my heart beat quicker as I recognised his well-known step, or heard the tones of his voice. Those were happy days! In the course of life there is perhaps no epoch so delightful, as the first hours of a passion, budding into flower, but not yet full blown; when hope silences the whispers of doubt, and security has not destroyed the trembling anxiety, that lends to love its strong, its thrilling excitement. I hardly dared to ask myself whether I was beloved; though I was conscious that my own heart had received an impression that rendered a reciprocity of sentiment essential to my peace. Happy in the present, fearing to anticipate the future, I *felt* as if in a blissful dream, from which I dreaded to awaken.

More than one nobleman, of my own country, had sought to find favour in my eyes, at Paris. It was in the French capital that I first entered into general society; for my extreme youth prior to the death of my dear father, and the seclusion in which we had lived ever since that melancholy event, had precluded my presentation at court; or my introduction into the circles in which my station and fortune entitled me to take a place. Consequently, until my arrival at Paris, I had no opportunity of seeing, or being seen.

My vanity was not a little gratified by observing that I was the principal magnet of attraction, in the reunions, to which all the English of distinction flocked. It required some such balm, to sooth the mortification I had experienced in my first preference; and though a

thought would sometimes intrude, that perhaps my wealth was even more seductive, in the eyes of my admirers, than myself, still my mirror showed me a face and figure that might, even if unaccompanied by the powerful adjuncts of broad lands and funded thousands, have captivated male hearts. I remarked, and with pain, that as each suitor approached to win attention, Lord Clydesdale gave way to them, with the air of a man who, having no intentions himself, determined not to interfere with those of others.

How did this conduct, on his part, wound and pique me! I discouraged my admirers, by such a decided and marked indifference towards them, that they soon perceived how trifling was their chance of success; and withdrew, leaving the field open to Lord Clydesdale, who resumed his place by me, with an air of satisfaction, but with no indication of any intention of maintaining it, against any new pretender to my hand. The anxiety I now experienced, was far more poignant than that which I had known, when Frederick Melville was the object of my girlish flame. It was now I began to think that *first love,* whatever may be said or sung of it, is not so arbitrary or durable in its influence, as young ladies imagine; and that, however unromantic it may sound, a second love is not inferior in the hopes, fears, and tenderness, to which it gives birth. It has only one deterioration, and that is the humiliating consciousness that it may, like the former one, subside. Yet, even this consciousness, like that of the inevitable certainty of death, sometimes produces little effect on the feeling, and as little on the conduct of mortals.

The Duc D'Entragues, a descendant of one of the most ancient houses in France, and remarkable for good looks, and a certain animation of manner, and vivacity of mind, peculiar to his countrymen, which, if it produce not wit, at least, resembles it so strongly, as often to impose on those who are not very competent judges, now paid his court to me. Unlike my English suitors, he was not to be checked by coldness, or disgusted by indifference. The manifestations of both, which I was not slow in making, as soon as I discovered that his attentions meant more than mere *politesse,* were received by him as proofs of the natural *gaucherie* of manner, universally attributed to English ladies, by foreigners. He was so impressed with a belief of his own fascinations, that he could not doubt their effect on me; and approached me with the

air of a man certain of success, but grateful to the vanquished for the facility of his victory.

I became provoked by this exhibition of self-complacency and conceit, and redoubled the *hauteur* of my manner. Lord Clydesdale, as was usual with him, resigned his place by my side, whenever the Duc approached; and this conduct on his part, confirmed the hopes of my confident admirer. I became picqued and offended with Lord Clydesdale, and, I fear, often permitted indications of my displeasure to be visible; but they produced no change in him, and he still continued to be a frequent, nay, almost a daily visitor at our hotel.

One morning Lady Walsingham was surprised by a letter from the Duc D'Entragues, requesting au interview. He came at the appointed hour; and,—in a pompous speech, in which, notwithstanding *la politesse Française,* he allowed *his* sense of the honour he was conferring, to be somewhat too evident,—formally demanded my hand. Lady Walsingham referred him to me; and he entered the saloon, where I was at work, congratulating himself and me, on the agreeable circumstance of not having encountered any resistance from *Madame ma Mère:*

"Mothers," he added, "being generally desirous of preventing their daughters from forming matrimonial engagements early in life, lest they should have their seeming age increased by the circumstance of being prematurely rendered grandmothers."

I blushed with anger, which he attributed to *mauvaise honte*; and attempting to seize my hand, he poured forth a rhapsody of compliments, a portion of which he meant for me, but a far larger part for himself. I could scarcely induce him to suppress his self-gratulations, in order that I might explain to him, how misplaced they were, at least, as far as I was concerned: and the expression of his countenance became perfectly ludicrous, as I explicitly, and haughtily gave him an unqualified refusal.

What! refuse to be a Duchesse, and of one of the most ancient houses in France? He did not exactly *say* this, but he implied something very like it. Why then had my mother given her sanction? but, above all, why could I, as a dutiful daughter, presume to reject the alliance my mother had approved. Such a thing never had been heard of in France, where the hands of sons and daughters are disposed of by their parents, without even a reference to the feelings of the parties most concerned.

It was an amusing scene to behold two people, under our peculiar circumstances, defending the customs of their separate countries; the lover, in the warmth of his defence of the superior wisdom and propriety of his own national institutions, for a time losing all sight of the violent passion he pretended to experience. When, however, he did recur to it, or rather when he resumed a repetition of the catalogue of the honours and advantages which I might inherit as Madame la Duchesse D'Entragues—among which, a *tabouret* at the chaste court of Louis XV. was not omitted—I, in referring to Lady Walsingham, accidentally mentioned the words *Belle Mère.*

"How!" demanded he, eagerly, "is Madame la Comtesse de Walsingham *not* your mother, your own real mother?"

"Certainly not," replied I, "how could it be possible? she is only twenty-five years old; and I shall soon be eighteen."

"How very odd," said he, "yes, now that I remember, though it never struck me before, Lady Walsingham is *not* an old woman; *ma foi*, nor a plain one neither. *Au contraire,* she is good looking: and only twenty-five, did you not say? *C'est bien drôle,* that I never remarked this before. Permit me to ask whether Madame la Comtesse has a large fortune?"

I answered in the affirmative, and stated the amount of her revenue, highly amused at observing the sudden interest excited by my information in the Duc's mind, relative to one whom, according to his own confession, he had scarcely even regarded during an acquaintance of some weeks.

"I never comprehend your English money," observed he, thoughtfully, "Six thousand pounds a year, I think you said; how much is that in our money? How many thousand louis d'or does it make?"

"You are doubtless, Monsieur le Duc, thinking of transferring the honor meant for me, to my stepmother."

"Another proof of my homage and *tendresse* for you," replied he, bowing low, "when being so unfortunate as to be rejected by the lovely daughter, I wish to become in some way or other connected with her, by addressing my suit to her amiable relative. Would that you had a sister, charming Lady Arabella, who at all resembled you, but who was less cruel;" (and he tried to look sentimental) "but as, unfortunately, you have not, I must hope for consolation with *Madame votre Belle Mère.*"

Highly diverted by the natural levity, and assumed sentimentality of my *ci-devant* admirer, I asked him how he possibly could have believed that Lady Walsingham could have a daughter of my age.

"To say the truth," answered he, frankly and gaily, "I never thought about the matter. I heard she was your mother; and we Frenchmen, when once a lady, and above all an English lady, has passed her teens, never know whether she is twenty-four or forty-four; all from your island are so fair and rosy. However, now that my attention is called to the subject, I must admit that Madame la Comtesse de Walsingham is *bien, très bien, en verité,* but the beauty of Miladi Arabella so far eclipses that of all other women, that I must be pardoned for overlooking that of *la belle mère.* We forget the stars when the moon is shining, and only remark them when that bright orb is not visible."

The Duc and I parted on more friendly terms than we had ever met before. His gaiety and frivolity amused me; and the perfect frankness with which he displayed his equal indifference for her who had rejected him, and for her to whom he was intending to be a suitor, had something so irresistibly comic in it, that it was impossible not to be entertained. When he was leaving the room, I could not repress the desire of telling him that in case his suit was unsuccessful with my stepmother, I knew an English lady at Paris who I thought would have no objection to become Duchess D'Entragues.

"Ah *méchante!*" said he, smiling; but, on observing the gravity I assumed, he returned, and continued,

"*Eh bien!* should I be so unhappy as not to be accepted by Madame la Comtesse, I will remember your *aimable* offer, charming Lady Arabella, and claim its fulfilment; for, *en verité,* I admire your nation so much, that I am determined to have an English wife."

The Duc lost not a moment in laying his proposals at the feet, as he gallantly expressed himself, of my stepmother; who was more surprised than gratified by this transfer of his matrimonial intentions. She could scarcely believe it possible that he could so speedily and unblushingly avow a sentiment for her that little more than an hour before he had professed to entertain for me; and he appeared to find it as difficult to comprehend, that she could refuse his suit; having flattered himself, from the facility with which she, as he fancied, received his overtures for me, that *she* thought him irresistible.

All the temptations held out to me were repeated to her, with the additional one, of the possibility of her rivalling the reigning favourite of that day at Versailles, the celebrated Madame du Barry, and of acquiring an almost regal influence at Court.

The delicacy of Lady Walsingham precluded her from informing me of this courtier-like inducement; but the Duc subsequently repeated it himself to some of my friends, as a proof of the want of spirit and of ambition of that low-born Englishwoman. But, what could he expect from the daughter of a *priest*—the offspring of sacrilege? He had not, however, he added, known this shocking circumstance until after he proposed, or never would he have offered her his hand. It was only in such an irreligious country as England that a priest durst acknowledge himself to be a father; or that the daughter of such an impious source could find a husband.

The Duc was in so perfect a state of ignorance of our religion, customs, and manners, that he could not comprehend that the ministers of our church were at liberty to marry; hence he concluded Lady Walsingham to be the offspring of sin and shame.

In two days after his rejection, the *femme de chambre* of Lady Walsingham, a young Englishwoman of remarkable beauty, with tears and blushes, informed her mistress that the French Duc was tormenting her with insulting proposals and letters. He had accidentally beheld the pretty Fanny; and, being disappointed in his offers to the two ladies of the family, addressed less honourable, but perhaps more sincere vows, to the maid. She gave his letter to Lady Walsingham; and I begged it of her. The following is a faithful transcript of it.

"My pretty heart, you have charm me. I loaf you, and tink you much too pretty to be von femme de chambre. If you will loaf me, I vill make you von grande ladi. You shall have von *charmant entre sol, des bijoux,* a *femme de chambre,* and a carriage, and never notings to do but amuse yourself, and loaf your devoted

"LE DUC D'E.

"My valet de chambre vill bring me your ansire."

Vexed as we were at this unprincipled attempt to corrupt the pretty and innocent Fanny, we could not resist a smile at the delectable *billet-*

doux, which made no other impression on her to whom it was addressed, than indignation.

We quitted Paris in a few days, leaving the Duc D'Entragues to look out for new conquests, and to ridicule the want of taste of English women of all classes. Lord Clydesdale remained at Paris, but a short time after our departure; and our next meeting was at Naples. The pleasure exhibited in his countenance at our *rencontre,* again awakened hope in my heart; whence it had lately been nearly banished, from observing his avoidance of every thing like marked attention. Our brief separation seemed to have thrown him off his guard; or, perhaps, it might be, that knowing the environs of Naples, and witnessing our desire to explore them, good nature tempted him to offer himself as our cicerone. No day passed in which we were not together; and each one found me still more assured of the deep hold he possessed over my affections, and less sanguine of that which I longed to obtain over his.

There were so few English travellers, at Naples, and the Neapolitans mingled so little with them, save on occasions of large balls, at which the English minister had the privilege of presenting his compatriots, that our habitual circle was much more circumscribed than at Paris. This seemed to gratify Lord Clydesdale; and increased the intimacy between us. We seldom parted at night without making an arrangement for some excursion for the following day; and time flew with a rapidity known only to those whose hearts are filled by a passion, which, in presence of its object, and surrounded by new and exciting scenery, gives a tenfold power to the wings of the hoary veteran.

The habitual pensiveness of Lord Clydesdale's manner seemed gradually to disappear; and to be replaced by a cheerfulness which, if it amounted not to gaiety, was more attractive to me. I have remarked that the generality of my sex prefer those of the other who are of a grave and sentimental turn; provided always, that the gravity proceeds not from dulness, but from a reflective cast of mind, which increases their respect, while it adds to the interest they experience. I have known a pale face and a pensive manner make impressions on female hearts that had successfully resisted the attacks of ruddy countenances and exhilarating gaiety: the possessor of these *agrémens* being more calculated to amuse than interest, are rarely remembered when absent. Women seldom forget the man who makes them sigh; but rarely recur to him who has

excited their mirth, even though a brilliant wit may have been displayed in his *bon mots* and good stories. He, therefore, who would captivate the fastidious taste of *le beau sexe,* must eschew too frequent smiles, even though he may have fine teeth; and must likewise avoid occasioning or promoting the exhibition of those pearly ornaments in her he wishes to permanently please.

The newly acquired cheerfulness of Lord Clydesdale however gratified me beyond measure, because I attributed it to the effect of my presence on him: and I hailed it as the harbinger of an explicit acknowledgment of my power, and a demand for the hand I longed to give him; the heart having already anticipated his solicitation.

While returning from the beautiful and romantic island of Ischia, where we had sojourned for a few days, and gliding over a moonlit sea, smooth and polished, as though it were a vast mirror spread out to reflect the heavens, Lord Clydesdale first spoke to me of love. Even now, though age has thrown its snow, not only on my tresses, but on my heart, that evening is remembered, nearly as vividly as if it had lately passed. Nay! What do I say? Infinitely more vividly; for the events of recent years seem to me more vague and indistinct than those of my early youth. As we approach the grave, our mother's breast, a second childhood is mercifully granted us; and we retain only the impressions which were stamped on the heart by the affections, while those of reason fade from the brain. Nature engraved the first; but experience formed the second. One is *felt*; the other has only been *thought.*

Yes, even now, in mental vision, I behold with a clearness to which my dim eyes can no more assist me, the dark, blue unruffled sea of the unrivalled Bay of Naples, with the glorious orb of light, and the thousand brilliant stars reflected on its glassy bosom. I hear the stroke of the oars, every movement of which sends forth a phosphoric effulgence from the surface of the waters, like a glittering sheet of molten silver. I hear the plaintive hymn of the peasants returning in the market boats from Naples; or the gay *barcarole* of the fishermen, mingled with the sounds of guitars and soft voices, that float past us. I see the island of Procida, in our rear, on the left, with Cape Misenum; and on the right, the fairy island of Nisida rising like an enchanted castle at the touch of some necromancer, from the bosom of the deep. Yes, all the scenes are present to my imagination, with the delicious reverie to which they gave

birth, and the face of him I loved; on which the beams of the moon shed a light that increased the intellectual character of its beauty.

We had been silent some time, each occupied, or rather abstracted, and softened by the influence of the balmy air of that luxuriant climate, and the surrounding loveliness of Nature. At length he spoke—

"Such a night and such a scene as this are rarely granted to us of the cold and sunless north. There is something soothing, calm, and holy in its influence; and yet, though sweet and soothing, it is melancholy too."

His voice was low and musical, and his countenance was in harmony with its tone; for it was mild, but mournful.

"This repose and beauty of nature," resumed he, "make one feel increased tenderness for those dear to us, still spared, with whom we share the enjoyment: but it also brings back the memory of those we have loved and lost—with whom we can share it no more. Can you, fair Arabella, who as yet have known only the cloudless spring of life, comprehend that while mourning an object, once inexpressibly dear, and still fondly remembered, the heart may awaken to another attachment; may again indulge emotions believed to be for ever departed; and may dare to hope to meet sympathy where now all its wishes point? When I saw you, dear Arabella, I thought I could never love again; I was so certain that my heart was dead to that passion, and buried in the early grave of her who first taught it to throb with tenderness, that I fearlessly trusted myself in the dangerous ordeal of your society. I found I was in error; such attractions have proved their irresistible empire; and I love you, truly, tenderly. May I indulge a hope that you will be my sweet consoler for past disappointment, and sorrow; and that you will teach this careworn heart to forget all but you?"

He paused, and I was speechless from emotion. At length, then, the certainty of knowing myself beloved was mine! a certainty that, previously to its existence, would, I fancied, have conferred unutterable happiness upon me. Did it now produce this effect! Alas! No! The felicity such a conviction would have bestowed was destroyed by the mortifying fact of ascertaining that he had loved another; that the bloom and freshness of a first passion could never be mine; and that I inspired only a second, perhaps a much less fervent affection than my predecessor had excited in the heart, where I wished to have reigned

alone! Severe was my disappointment, as jealousy—aye, jealousy of the dead—shot its envenomed arrows through my heart.

I could have wept in very bitterness; but shame, womanly shame, checked this exposure of the secret feelings of my soul; and silent and trembling I almost feared to trust myself with words.

"You answer me not, dearest Arabella," resumed Lord Clydesdale, his voice tremulous with emotion, "Have I then deceived myself in thinking that I might hope to create an interest in that gentle heart?"

Tears involuntarily filled my eyes; I longed to, but dared not tell him that my silence proceeded from no want of the sentiment he desired to create—but, alas! rather from an excess of it, which rendered me wretched at the knowledge that he had loved before. A thought of rejecting his suit now that I found with what bitter feelings an acceptance of it would be accompanied crossed my mind; but I turned affrighted from the contemplation of banishing from my sight, the only being whose presence was necessary to my happiness. No! I would accept the portion of his heart that might still be mine—I would deign to occupy a small niche in that temple, dedicated to the worship of the dead. I, proud and haughty as I was, would try to be satisfied with the ashes of a fire which another had kindled; but even this humiliation was less painful than to lose him altogether. These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind. The misery of years was compressed into the brief period which had elapsed since his avowal of affection; and already my heart had grown old in suffering. I gave him my hand, for I could not speak; and he pressed it fondly to his lips, while he murmured words of tenderness, which soothed, though they did not satisfy, the demon jealousy that was writhing within my tortured breast. Had any one told me that I should thus feel when first assured of his preference, how would I have denied the possibility! Tears I might have believed would flow; for joy and grief declare themselves by this dew of the heart: but I would have asserted that mine would be tears of joyful tenderness, of grateful, softened happiness. What were they now? The waters of bitterness, springing from a fountain newly opened in the soul, and never again to be sealed, except by death.

Before we separated on that eventful night, he asked permission to inform Lady Walsingham that I had *not rejected him*. The very terms he used softened me; for they indicated that he had remarked, that my

manner of receiving his suit was more like a non-rejection than a positive acceptance of it; a delicate and discerning homage that gratified my sensitiveness.

Never did hermit or philosopher reflect more on the disappointments that await the hopes of mortals, than did I, through the long and sleepless night which followed Lord Clydesdale's declaration of love: that declaration which I fancied was to have conferred unmingled felicity. As the whispered words of tenderness he had breathed in my ear were recalled, the recollection that similar words had been poured into the ear of another, came to torment me. The soft glances of love with which he sought to meet my eyes when urging his suit, had been often fixed on another, perhaps a fairer and dearer face; and the gentle pressure of his hand had often been felt by one who had enjoyed all the bloom and freshness of his first affections. Had he ceased to love her? that he had not ceased to remember and mourn her, he had confessed; and now *my* fond and fervent affection was to be repaid by the comparatively cold and languid one of a disappointed and exhausted heart.

And yet there were moments in which my better feelings prevailed—moments in which I pitied the sorrow he had endured, and almost determined to sacrifice my selfish regrets, and devote my life to his happiness. Yes, I would be the soother of the traces left by past grief; and the creator of new hopes, new blessings. I would generously stifle my own disappointment in pity to his; I would question him on all that he had endured, identify myself by the force of my sympathy with his mournful recollections of her he had lost; and teach him gently, gradually, to forget her, in his devoted attachment to me. How ardently did I long to hear every particular connected with his former passion. Was the object beautiful?—How strange is the human heart! My vanity led me to wish that she had been fair in no ordinary degree; for there is something peculiarly humiliating to a woman vain of her own pretensions to beauty, in becoming the successor of a plain one, in the affections of a husband. And yet I had a latent dread, that if she had been as lovely as I was disposed to imagine her, the recollections of her attractions might eclipse the reality of mine. In short, my ill-governed mind was in such a state of morbid excitement, that I scarcely knew what I desired. Only one sentiment stood prominently forth above all others,

and that was disappointment,—deep and bitter disappointment, arising in the consciousness that all the wild and fond illusions of love, which I wished him whom I adored to have entertained for the first and only time for me, he had already experienced. Then came the thought, that I too, had loved before; and yet in this my second attachment, none of the fond illusions that characterised the first were wanting.

There was some comfort in this recollection; until it was followed by the painful one, that my first affection, having been unpartaken by him who inspired it, had never been cemented by the thousand nameless but powerful associations that only a mutual tenderness can bestow. Mine was nothing more than a mere girlish fancy, never matured by sympathy, or rendered indelible by reciprocity. I forgot in the excitement of the actual present, all the sufferings of the less vivid past. The waking dreams, sleepless nights, and tearstained pillow, were all forgotten; and the passion which, while it existed, I had believed to have been as violent as indestructible, was now considered to be nothing more than an evanescent preference. Strange infatuation! the repetition of which has induced some mortals, with susceptible feelings, to regard their hearts as plants, that, though subject to the laws of nature in casting off their leaves at certain periods, can always put forth fresh shoots, and bloom again as genially as before. I even excused the intensity of my present sentiments over those of my past, by the superiority of the object which had given them birth. The graceful, the dignified Lord Clydesdale, with his noble air and polished manners, cast into shade the handsome person, but grave and simple demeanour, of Frederick Melville. Nay, I now wondered how I ever could have been captivated by him, and smiled at my own delusion.

Such are some of the incongruities of that almost inexplicable enigma, —a woman's heart.

When Lady Walsingham congratulated me next day on the prospect of happiness that now opened to me, and expressed her warm approbation of my suitor, I could scarcely restrain my tears; and I looked so little joyous on the occasion, that she positively imagined she had been in error, in supposing that Lord Clydesdale had interested my feelings. Little did she know the tumult to which my mind was a prey at that moment! for though I had so often experienced her sympathizing

kindness, a latent sentiment, it might be vanity, or shame, or both, prevented me from avowing my real sentiments.

When Lord Clydesdale came, the increased tenderness and animation of his manner reassured me. The solicitude with which he marked my pallid cheek and swoln eyes, was so apparent, that hope whispered that love alone, could have excited such interest. I longed, yet feared, to question him of the past, when we were alone. I dreaded to revive an image in his recollection, which I desired, oh! how anxiously desired, might be banished from it forever; and yet the thought of her whose memory I dreaded to recall, was so predominant in mine, and filled me with such painful emotions, that I felt that I could have no peace until he should have reposed in my breast the mournful tale of his former attachment. Often did the question hover on my lips; and as often did it die away, without my being able to frame words that would elicit his confidence without betraying the secret jealousy which was torturing me. There is a conscious unworthiness in jealousy, which, if the victim be proud, makes her shrink from its exhibition. I felt this powerfully, and added to it, was the dread of forfeiting his esteem, by the display of this egotistical passion. I am now surprised when I reflect on the duplicity with which I affected a strong sympathy in his regret for her he had lost; and still more surprised, when I remember how completely he was the dupe of this pretended sympathy. His love for me seemed positively to have been increased tenfold, by the interest I evinced in the fate of my predecessor. My generosity, so superior, as he said, to that of the generality of females, delighted him.

How little did he know the heart of woman! For though there may be many who might be gentle enough to regret an unknown individual of their own sex, who is represented as having gone down young, beautiful, and good, to an early grave, while yet love and hope would fain have bound her to earth, few have sufficient self-control to conquer her jealous emotions, while listening to the recapitulation of the perfections of the lost one; or the grief her loss had excited in the breast of the object of her own affection. A man precludes a similar confidence from the woman he loves, by openly displaying his total want of sympathy, in any allusion to previous attachments, even should a woman be so devoid of tact as to make them; while we of the softer sex, though pained to the

heart by such disclosures, shrink from checking them, though they are hoarded in the memory, to be often dwelt upon, but never without pain.

This peculiar dislike to the belief of a lover ever having before experienced the tender passion, has been often ascribed to vanity; but I believe it originates in a delicacy less reprehensible, and consequently more entitled to commiseration. Devoid of refinement and delicacy must that woman be, who, having accepted a suitor, entertains him with lamentations *for,* or descriptions *of,* the one who preceded him: like the lady, who, when married a second time, dwelt so fondly and perpetually on the merits of her poor dear first husband, that she compelled his successor to *declare,* that however much *she* might regret the defunct, *he* still more truly mourned his death. It is this indelicacy that led a man, who knew human nature well, to assert that a man should never marry a widow, however attractive, whose first husband had not been *hanged*; as that ignominious catastrophe furnished the only security for her not continually reverting to him.

But to resume the thread of my narrative: no day elapsed, that Lord Clydesdale did not inflict a jealous pang on my heart, by some unconscious reference to past times; until at last my apparent sympathy lured him into a more explicit disclosure of his feelings; and he related the story of his first love.

It was a simple one; but the intensity of his emotion in repeating it, the warmth with which he dwelt on the personal and mental charms of her he had lost, wounded me to the soul. Yet, though writhing under the infliction, I so skillfully concealed my sufferings, that he was the dupe to my affected interest about one to whose death alone, I owed his present affection. There is a great though secret pleasure in talking of any former attachment, that has not been dissolved by circumstances humiliating to vanity. Those broken by inconstancy, are seldom recurred to, because they are mortifying to self-love. But to dwell on a love that ended but with life, and to repeat incidents strongly indicative of the force of the attachment of the deceased, is one of the greatest, though apparently the least, egotistical gratifications to which our *amour propre* can have recourse. One can repeat how well she loved him, in a thousand varied ways, without shocking the ears of the confidant, by his self-eulogiums; yet each of these examples of the passion that has been felt for the

narrator, may be considered as indubitable proofs of his attractions, and merits.

Lord Clydesdale's first love, was a young and fascinating creature, born with the germe of a disease, that seems ever to select the fairest objects for its prey. Consumption, which, like the Pagans of old, adorns its victims for the sacrifice, had rendered the beauty of the youthful Lucinda Harcourt still more dazzlingly bright. The hectic of her cheek, the lustre of her eye, and the deep vermilion of her lips, those sure and fatal symptoms of the destroyer, which like the canker-worm in the rose, feeds on its core while the external petals still wear their fresh hue, were considered by her lover, as charms peculiarly her own, and not as indications of incipient disease. Even in relating her lingering illness, and mournful death, he seemed unconscious that she fell a prey to a malady hereditary in her family, and to which her mother owed her death in the bloom of youth. No, with the delusion inherent in mortals, which ever seeks, even in misfortune some salve from vanity, he attributed the untimely death of the fair Lucinda to the unwonted agitation produced by the excessive attachment, with which he had inspired her youthful breast; and the anxiety attending the period, previous to his formal demand of her hand, for it appears that he had, though deeply smitten, taken a considerable period to reflect, before he proposed for her. He spoke in such panegyrics of the transparency of her complexion, and the sylph-like fragility of her form, that I almost longed to possess these infallible symptoms of disease; as I dreaded his comparing my healthful but less attractive bloom, and rounded figure, with the evanescent charms he so rapturously described.

"Have you no picture of her?" asked I, trembling, lest he should draw forth from his breast, a treasured miniature carefully concealed from prying eyes.

"Yes," replied he, "I have an admirable resemblance of her, which you shall see, and which has never left my breast since I lost her, until you, fair and dear Arabella, listened to my suit."

I involuntarily placed my hand within his, at this acknowledgement; for I felt grateful for the delicacy of the renunciation of the portrait. Nay, in consideration of it I almost forgave the warmth of his praises of her; for, slight as the circumstance was, it made a great impression on me.

E. T. Parris *H. Cook*

Miss Lucinda Harcourt

The next day, he brought the miniature, and though I had been prepared to expect beauty of no ordinary kind, I confess that the extreme loveliness of the portrait surprised—ay, and shall I own the truth?—displeased me. If I had previously indulged a jealousy of the fair Lucinda, what were my jealous pangs now, that I beheld the radiant beauty of her face? The artist had caught the almost seraphic expression of her countenance, that fine and elevated expression, where the purity of the angel seems to have already descended on the suffering saint. It wanted only a halo round the head, to be one of the best personifications of a martyred saint ascending to heaven; and I, even *I*, could not repress the tear that fell on the crystal that covered it, though the source whence it sprang was not free from alloy.

This apparent sympathy, while it rendered me dearer to Lord Clydesdale, lured him into a still more frequent recurrence to the object of his first love. He judged more favourably of me than I deserved, in imputing to me a freedom from that envy, and jealousy, from which so few of my sex are exempt; and I had not courage to risk the forfeiture of this good opinion, by acknowledging how little it was merited. Had I avowed my weakness, how much unhappiness should I not have escaped! But no, pride, the most dangerous passion which can approach love, forbade it; and I yielded to its unwise suggestions.

It was agreed between Lord Clydesdale and myself, that our marriage should not take place until our return to England. But as we were considered affianced, we spent the greater part of every day together; and each day seemed to cement our mutual affection, as we drew plans for the future, and built castles in the air. Life is at best but a shadowy scene, some charm of which vanishes every day; the actual enjoyments, few and far between, often poisoned by untoward circumstances, or followed by painful regret. Are we not then wise, in creating for ourselves the innocent pleasure of fancy building? where Hope, the syren, helps to erect the structure, and almost cheats Reason into believing the possibility of its completion. Those were indeed blissful days! when beneath the blue skies of genial Italy, and wandering by the as blue waters of the Mediterranean sea that mirrored them, the balmy air of the delicious climate of Naples, made its influence known by exhilarating our spirits, and diffusing its softness over our feelings. And yet the bliss was not unalloyed! When was that of mortals ever so?

though each believes himself worthy of happiness, and likely, if not sure, to attain it.

The more tenderness Lord Clydesdale seemed to evince, and the more warmth I myself experienced, the more susceptible did I become of the assaults of the fiend jealousy; each successive attack lacerating my heart more cruelly. Every allusion to the lost Lucinda tortured me; and yet I had myself at the commencement encouraged these allusions. Now that I believed myself beloved, and felt with what passionate tenderness I repaid the affection of Lord Clydesdale, a recurrence to his former passion appeared an insult, and an injustice, that I was disposed to resent with an anger that required the exertion of all my reasoning powers to subdue.

At length I took courage, and asked him to let me have the portrait of Lucinda. He looked surprised—hesitated; and then demanded why I wished to possess it? I acknowledged that I considered it so exquisitely beautiful, that while it remained in his keeping I should always dread his contemplation of it might elicit comparisons highly disadvantageous to my own inferior attractions. This avowal drew from him some of those praises peculiar to love, which, however exaggerated, are never unacceptable; and he yielded the portrait, though with reluctance, on my solemn promise that it should be carefully guarded and considered a sacred deposit.

The possession of this long coveted treasure soothed and calmed the demon in my breast for many days; yet each time I gazed on it, the angelic softness and beauty of the countenance reillumined the nearly extinguished spark of jealousy in my mind. I have, after contemplating it long and attentively, sought my mirror, and tried to think the image it reflected was not so very far inferior to this captivating picture, as jealousy whispered it to be. But, alas! not all the suggestions of vanity could blind me to the immeasurable superiority of the countenance of Lucinda, that dead rival, who in her grave, as I fancied, still triumphed over me. It was true, my finely chiselled features and the perfect oval of my face might have contested with her the palm of beauty; but the expression—oh! how infinitely did mine fall short of hers! I forgot in contemplating my own countenance that the baleful passions of envy and jealousy which pervaded my heart at that moment, lent their disfiguring influence to my face. No wonder, then, that I was conscious

of the vast difference between a physiognomy, expressive only of a heavenly calm, and that in which worldly and sinful feelings were delineated.

The sunshine produced by my lover's renunciation of the portrait had made itself manifest many days; when, one luckless evening, while seated on the balcony of the Palazzo we inhabited, and engaged in that dreamy, tender conversation into which lovers are prone to fall, on my expressing some doubt of the depth and devotion of his love, he passionately seized my hand, and exclaimed,

"Yes, adored Lucinda!—Arabella—I would say"—

"You need not complete the sentence," interrupted I, coldly, "it is but natural that the name of the object which is most dearly treasured in your memory should sometimes escape from your lips."

"This is unjust and cruel, Arabella," said he, "you know, or ought to know, how inexpressibly dear you are to my heart, when all its feelings, all its regrets, have been bared to your view. Why have you deceived me by an apparent sympathy, if you could not bear with an occasional, an involuntary recurrence to the past?"

The gentleness of his reproach, which had so much more of sorrow than of anger in it, disarmed my displeasure. I felt ashamed of my petulance, and had an instinctive presentiment that by this selfish ebullition I had forfeited some portion of his esteem.

"I should be unworthy of your affection, dearest Arabella," resumed he, "were I capable of deceiving you by asserting that I ever could banish the memory of her who in life was so beloved. But that memory, mournful though it be, precludes not the fondest, truest affection for you. Nay, you should consider the constancy of my attachment to one in her grave, as a gage of that which shall bind me to the only being on earth who could console me for her loss."

I refused not the hand he now pressed to his lips; a few kind words and gentle tears on my part marked our renewed amity, and we parted that night as lovers part after a reconciliation of their first misunderstanding; for the harsh name of quarrel I could not give it.

But, though we met in fondness next day, and every day for many weeks, confidence was banished between us. The name of Lucinda, or any reference to her, never escaped his lips; but this self-imposed silence and constraint tortured me more than his former lavish praises or tender

regrets had ever done. The demon jealousy whispered, that though the name was banished from his lips, her image had become more tenaciously fixed in his heart; and that an opinion of my selfishness and want of self-control had led to this reserve and increased seriousness on his part. This conviction haunted and goaded me; yet I dared not trust myself to utter a word of it to him. I feared to sink still lower in his estimation, or to be hurried into some expression of harshness that might lead to a serious misunderstanding, perhaps a rupture; and such a result, even in moments of the greatest mental excitement, I dared not contemplate, so warm and fervent was my attachment to him.

How narrowly, and with what lynx eyes, did I examine his countenance every day when we met. A shade of sadness on his brow, or an involuntary sigh, angered me; they were received as incontrovertible proofs that his thoughts were on my dead rival.

Our *tête-à-têtes* were no longer marked by that outpouring of the soul, that boundless confidence which had formerly existed between us; and both were conscious of this change, though anxious to conceal it from each other. His conversation now referred wholly to the future; he avoided all reference to his past life, as if it had been stained by some crime of deep die; and I felt as if there was a gulph between us—that is, between our souls' communion. The consciousness of this gulph having been created by my own waywardness, added to the bitterness of my feelings; I became silent and abstracted; and though he was never ceasing in his attentions, the sense of our mutual constraint now robbed them of their greatest charm in my estimation.

It was at this period that Sir Augustus Fauconberg, an intimate friend of Lord Clydesdale, arrived at Naples. He established himself in the same hotel with him, and was presented to us. He was one or two years senior to Lord Clydesdale, and remarkably good looking, accomplished, and agreeable. His presence was a relief to us all; for his vivacity, though finely tempered by good breeding, never failed to enliven those with whom he associated. A short time before, I should have considered the presence of a stranger in our limited circle as an unwelcome interruption to the frequent *tête-à-têtes* I enjoyed with my affianced husband; for Lady Walsingham devoted much of her time to feminine occupations, and left us much alone; but now, those *tête-à-têtes* had lost their chief attraction. The chain of love still bound us, but the flowers that wreathed

and concealed its links had, one by one, withered and dropped off. Neither of us wished for freedom, nor dared anticipate division, but all the sweetness of love had departed; we were not happy together, and yet we dreaded to try if we could support separation.

One evening I had remarked, with anger, blended with sorrow, that Lord Clydesdale appeared to be more than usually depressed. Instead of soothing him by kindness, I maintained a sullen silence; and even when he bade us adieu for the night, I returned not the pressure of his hand, but suffered mine to remain cold and passive within his grasp, as if it had been a lifeless substance.

My heart reproached me for this unkindness during the night; and I made good resolves for the coming day. Indeed, so salutary were my reflections, that I determined henceforth to conquer my waywardness; and by resuming my former confiding tenderness, win back his.

I longed, impatiently longed, for his visit; I counted the hours that must intervene before the arrival of that which usually brought him to our Palazzo; and attired myself with more than my accustomed care, that I might appear more attractive in his eyes. I seemed to awake from a disagreeable dream; and the recollection of my own too frequent fits of silence and sullenness, to which his forbearing gentleness, and constant affection, formed a striking contrast, rose up to reproach me. Yes, I would amply repay him for all my past suspicions and unkindness, and never more give way to them. In this frame of mind I left my chamber. My mirror told me, that never had I looked more attractive. I had attired myself in his favourite colours, wore a bracelet and ring, his gifts, and, with a throbbing heart, awaited his coming.

Hour after hour elapsed, and he appeared not; a thousand vague forebodings of evil haunted me—I could settle to no occupation, but kept continually walking on the balcony that overlooked the street by which he must approach, in order to catch a glance of him.

At length, Lady Walsingham entered the saloon; and observed that she had thought Lord Clydesdale was there. When informed that I had not seen him, she appeared really uneasy; for, though she then mentioned not the report to me, she had that morning heard that an epidemic disease had, during the last few days, been making great ravages in the town; and, consequently, coupled his unusual absence with this startling intelligence. A servant was instantly dispatched to the

hotel where Lord Clydesdale resided, to inquire for him: and my fears were excited, and Lady Walsingham's confirmed, by the information that Lord Clydesdale had not left his chamber that day.

"But here, my lady," said our servant, "is a letter which the porter forgot to send your ladyship; and which ought to have been delivered this morning."

To break the seal and devour the contents of this billet, was the work of a moment. A few lines stated, that a slight indisposition would confine the writer to his apartment for that day, but that the next would see him at our Palazzo. An air of constraint pervaded this note, which I instantly attributed to his desire of concealing the extent of his malady. My heart died within me as the idea of his danger presented itself to my mind; and ardently did I wish that I were his wife, that I might have the privilege of watching over his sick couch, as love only can watch. I magnified his danger until the most painful images were conjured up to my terrified imagination. I fancied him ill—dying—and I, though his betrothed, precluded, by the usages of the world, from alleviating his sufferings, or receiving his last sigh. How impatiently did I writhe under these bitter thoughts! how execrate my own folly, for ever having annoyed him by my petulance, or wounded him by my selfish and wayward jealousy! What resolutions, instigated by "the late remorse of love," did I form, never again, should it please Heaven to restore him to me, to give him cause for reproach or chagrin. Yes, I would conquer my own feelings, and attend solely to his. Though aware how deeply, how tenderly I was devoted to him, I knew not until the thought of his danger took possession of me, how wholly, how passionately my soul doted upon him!

I threw myself into a bergère, and covering my face with my hands, wept in uncontrollable anguish; heedless of the attempts at consolation, made by my tender and true friend Lady Walsingham. She was suggesting the expediency of sending an English physician to Lord Clydesdale, when the door of the apartment was thrown open, and Sir Augustus Fauconberg entered.

"Tell me, I entreat you, tell me how he is?" I exclaimed, reckless of betraying my tearful agitation. He hesitated and looked aghast. This conduct verified my fears.

"I am prepared for the worst," resumed I, "I see his danger in your face; it is confirmed to me by your hesitation. Let me, I implore you, hear it at once, or this suspense will destroy me."

"I really do not comprehend," replied he with a face of astonishment. "Who is ill, or in danger? for I am not aware that any individual in whom we take an interest is in that predicament."

I viewed this speech as a good-natured subterfuge, used to avoid declaring the real state of the case; and it almost maddened me. Lady Walsingham observing me to be incapable of articulating another word, so overpowered was I by my feelings, here interposed; and stated that we had heard that Lord Clydesdale was confined to his chamber by indisposition.

"I assure you I was totally ignorant of it," answered Sir Augustus; "but the truth is, I told Clydesdale last night that I intended to proceed to Sorento to-day with some friends of mine, so that he believes me gone. They changed their plans, and, as I had risen early, I have been making an excursion in the environs. Still, I think there must be some mistake, for I saw Clydesdale's *valet de chambre* this morning; and he said nothing of the circumstance."

"It is, nevertheless, I fear, but too true," replied Lady Walsingham, "for Lady Arabella received a note from Lord Clydesdale, which, though it makes light of his indisposition, refers to it as the cause for not coming here to-day."

"When did the note arrive?" demanded Sir Augustus.

"Only a short time before you entered."

"And Lady Arabella has received no other note from Clydesdale?"

"No other," answered I, still weeping.

"It is strange," resumed Sir Augustus, "for I saw Clydesdale write you a note last evening, and heard him give orders that it should be sent to your palazzo early in the morning."

"And was he then in perfect health?" asked Lady Walsingham.

"Most certainly," replied Fauconberg, "but rather more serious than usual, which I attributed to the recollection that this day was the second anniversary of the death of a person once dear to him; every recurrence to whom his friends avoid, knowing the subject to be fraught with pain to him."

In an instant, my tears were dried, the burning blushes of shame and anger, that suffused my cheek, seemed to effect this operation; and the fiend jealousy awoke in my breast, to renew the infliction of a thousand pangs. So, while I, reckless of observation, exposed my love and anguish, at the bare thought of his danger, to the gaze of others, *he* having voluntarily excluded himself from my presence, was weeping over the memory of another love; and leaving me to endure all the alarm and wretchedness which his acknowledgement of indisposition could not fail to excite. The subterfuge too, of affecting illness—it was unworthy—it was base! The whole current of my feelings became changed. Such conduct was not to be borne. No, I would, whatever the effort might cost me, break with him for ever; and his friend, Sir Augustus Fauconberg, who had been a spectator of my weakness, when I believed him ill, should now be a witness of the firmness with which I could eternally resign him.

Such were the thoughts that flitted through my troubled brain, making my temples throb, and my heart's pulses beat in feverish excitement. I silenced every whisper of love, every dictate of reason. Pride, ungovernable pride, and indomitable jealousy, now took entire possession of my heart, banishing every gentle and feminine emotion. If, a short time before, while suffering agonies at the bare notion of my lover's illness, any one had told me that the assurance of his being well could fail to convey to me the most ecstatic joy, I should have pronounced the fulfilment of the prediction impossible. There is nothing to which I would not have cheerfully submitted to have had this blissful assurance. But now—it only gave me torture, and excited rage. Such are the revolutions to which evil passions can lead those who are so unfortunate as to submit to their empire!

I sought my chamber, and giving way to my wild and wrathful impulse, seized a pen, and wrote to Lord Clydesdale to declare that I considered our engagement at an end. I stated that my determination was irrevocable, and that any attempt to change it would be as unavailing as offensive to me.

I despatched this ill-judged and intemperate letter, proud of this supposed conquest over self, this triumph of my evil nature over my better. I would not wait for a calmer moment, lest my heart might relent, and be disposed to pardon him, who was still dear to it. No, while

mourning a *dead* mistress, he should have cause to grieve for a *living* one; and I was obdurate enough to take a malicious pleasure in thus overwhelming him with a new affliction, while he was meditating on a former one.

I never reflected that the excuse of a slight indisposition, urged by Lord Clydesdale to account for not coming on that day, was only made to avoid offending me, by candidly stating the true cause of his absence. It was my injustice, my petulance, that compelled him to have recourse to this deception, a deception adopted only to spare my weakness. I expected to receive a deprecating answer to my angry renunciation of him, notwithstanding my prohibition; nay more, I was not without hopes that he would come to plead his cause in person. But, as hour after hour elapsed, without bringing any tidings of him, I began to tremble at heart, though I affected a careless exterior, at the probable consequences of my own folly.

Lady Walsingham, with that intuitive perception which belongs exclusively to women, had penetrated the state of my feelings. She deplored, but pitied their wilfulness; and gently endeavoured to sooth them. She dwelt on the compassion and forbearance due to the regrets of those who mourn an object beloved, even though a brighter prospect opens on the bereaved heart, by a new attachment.

"But, if the former object be still mourned," answered I, "why should the mourner seek another love? Such a course is being unfaithful to the dead, and unjust to the living."

"You are yet too young, dear Arabella," replied Lady Walsingham, "to have fathomed the secret recesses of the human heart, in which the desire of happiness is indigenous and indestructible. If robbed of the object of its affection, the grief that follows, though deep and sometimes durable, is not eternal. The regret, which during the first bitterness attending such a calamity, was violent and engrossing, becomes by the operation of time every day mitigated. The lover is conscious of this gradual change; and at first shrinks from what he believes to be an infirmity of his nature. He summons memory, with all her potent spells, to awaken the grief that slumbers; he dwells upon all the charms of the lost one, recalls all her love; and imagination, excited by recollection, supplies the place, and for a brief space, enacts the part of grief. Gratitude aids this self-deception, which is peculiar to fine natures; the

lost are thought of, talked of, and referred to, with tenderness, long after the survivor is consoled for their loss: nay, he frequently perseveres in premeditatedly offering this homage to the manes of the departed, as an expiation for an involuntary oblivion of them. You know not, and may you never know, dear Arabella, the shame, the tender regret, and self-reproach, with which a sensitive mind first becomes sensible that it *can* be consoled for a loss, the regret for which, when first experienced, was imagined to be eternal. But when the place once occupied by the departed, is usurped by a new, perhaps a dearer object,—for grief increases the susceptibility, and tends to make the second attachment more fond than the former,—in proportion to the sensitiveness of the feelings of the lover, will be the recollections given to the dead; recollections that do not rob the living of the slightest portion of his tenderness, but which rather originate in his deep consciousness of the force of his present attachment. He who devoted not a pensive thought to the memory of a buried love, will never be capable of fidelity to a living one. Such regrets are not the offspring of sorrow: they are the funereal flowers with which, while animated by hope of happiness, the survivor decks the grave of one for whose loss he is consoled."

My feelings became softened towards Lord Clydesdale, as I listened to the mild reasoning of Lady Walsingham; and when she informed me that his friend Sir Augustus Fauconberg had acknowledged to her, that he never imagined Lord Clydesdale could have loved again, so tenderly devoted had he been to his first attachment, and so fondly was it repaid by its object, I severely blamed my own wilfulness in having inflicted pain, where I should have offered consolation. Oh, how I longed for him to come, or write, to deprecate the anger which was now subdued, that I might convince him of my repentance and affection! Every noise in the ante-room made my heart throb, every step that approached I hoped might be his; and in this belief I have started from my chair to meet him with an extended hand, and words of love hovering on my lips.

Lady Walsingham, anxious to make an impression on me, related all that Sir Augustus Fauconberg had told her, of the personal charms, cultivated mind, and angelic disposition of Lady Lucinda Harcourt. She dwelt on the profound tenderness of this young and lovely creature for her betrothed husband; and on the heavenly resignation with which she prepared herself for another world, though blessed with all that could

render existence desirable. She related the long and lingering illness, and the death-bed farewell of this fair being; and the overwhelming affliction of her affianced husband, who fled from England, to seek in a strange land the power of supporting a blow, that seemed to have for ever destroyed his earthly hopes.

When she described the satisfaction experienced by Fauconberg, at discovering from Lord Clydesdale that his heart had yielded to a second attachment, in which he looked forward to the enjoyment of the happiness he had believed to have been lost to him for ever, I could not restrain my tears; and, as they flowed plenteously down my cheeks, I felt that I had never loved Lord Clydesdale so fondly as at that moment. Had he then entered, yes, proud as I was, I would have confessed my fault, and atoned for it, by every future effort to control the waywardness of my nature, and the petulance of my temper. Alas! such happiness was not in store for me. I had madly dashed the cup from my lip: and it was decreed that it should never more be offered!

But let me not anticipate my story. The long evening wore away, without bringing me any tidings of my lover. How did I count the weary hours, on the dial of that pendule, on which I had so often marked their rapid flight, when, after a long visit, he rose to depart, and I disbelieved that the hour of separation was yet come! How often during that interminable evening had I resolved to write to him, and seek a reconciliation; but pride, and it may be, female reserve, prohibited this concession. Though supported by the hope that the morrow would see him at my feet, still my heart was troubled that the sun should have gone down on our anger; and that our estrangement should have endured a single night.

Even now, though half a century has elapsed since that night, I have not forgotten the tender remorse, the good resolves, and the overflowing affection with which I dwelt on his noble qualities, and my own unworthiness. For the first time, my tears flowed for her, who had preceded me in his heart, as I pictured her to myself in all her youth and beauty, in all her gentleness and love, descending to the untimely grave, whence he could not save her. All that I now experienced of affection for him, she had felt; and in giving my tears to her memory, I seemed to be shedding them for myself, such an identity did my now altered feelings appear to create between our sentiments. Yes, I would for the future

partake his recollections of her; her name should be a sacred bond of union and sympathy between us. I would think of her as a dear, a lost sister, and emulate him in guarding her sweet memory from oblivion. With these gentle thoughts I sank into slumber, and awoke to despair.

Never did the sun shine with greater splendour, or on a more lovely scene, than presented itself to my eyes, on awaking the morning after my fatal letter to Lord Clydesdale. I hailed the bright sky, as an omen of reconciliation—of happiness; and my spirits rose from the weight that had oppressed them, as I joyfully anticipated an interview with him so dear to me. I had only completed my toilette, when a letter, bearing a superscription in his well-known writing, was presented to me, and I pressed it to my lips before breaking the seal, so impressed was I with the thought that it was to announce his visit. Alas! I had only perused a few lines, when the fatal truth stood revealed, and *I* was a desolate, a deserted woman. Even while I was cheating myself with joyful anticipations of our meeting, nay, chiding the tardy moments that intervened, he, on whom my soul doted with all the fervour of youthful love, was hurrying from me with cruel haste! and now was many, many miles distant. He no longer breathed the same air with me, and yet I was unconscious of this change

O prescience! vainly attributed to the sympathy of affection, never more could I put faith in thee! when no secret foreboding whispered me that *he* was flying from me; when no perceptible alteration in my being warned me that the most fatal hour of my life was at hand!

And he could leave me, without one word of adieu, one last lingering look of love! Too, too well had he obeyed my imperious, my fatal mandate to see me no more. Why,—oh! why, had he not sought me? one word, one look, would have banished every harsh feeling between us. But no, he accepted (nay, perhaps, had eagerly desired) the first opportunity of breaking the bond that united us. My peevishness and unreasonable jealousy had wearied and disgusted him; he foresaw that our union could not tend to our mutual happiness, and he burst the chain that my folly and wilfulness had rendered so galling. Yes, the fault was wholly mine: and deeply, incessantly did I expiate it, by a despair that tolled the eternal knell of my departed hopes.

In bitterness of spirit, I turned from the bright sun, whose splendour but an hour before I had blessed as an omen of happiness. Now its

brilliancy was as a mockery to the darkness that veiled my soul: I shut out its light, and having secured myself from interruption, by locking the door of my chamber, I gave way to the poignant sorrow that filled my breast almost to suffocation, in a paroxysm of tears. I wept in uncontrollable anguish until the violence of my emotions had nearly subdued my physical force. At some moments, forgetful of all but my love, and despair, I determined on pursuing him; on seeking an explanation, and on beseeching him to let my recent conduct pass into oblivion. Yes, I would tell him all that I had suffered within the last twenty-four hours; and all the atonement I had determined on making, for the uneasiness I had caused him. Surely when he was acquainted that my unreasonable jealousy was but the effect of love, he would overlook, he would pardon the folly and injustice into which it had hurried me.

Such were the thoughts that passed rapidly through my mind, and as they presented themselves, I rose from the couch, on which in my despair I had thrown myself, with the resolution of communicating my intention of seeking him to Lady Walsingham. But then came the suggestions of reason, of delicacy, of pride, to my aid; and, shall I own it, those of the last mentioned passion were the most potent in guiding my decision. How could I announce to the modest, the dignified Lady Walsingham, that, casting aside the maidenly reserve which befitted me, I was about to pursue a lover who fled from me! No, this was impossible; I would not, I *could* not, bring myself to such a degradation. But no sooner had I decided on the utter impracticability of this last delusive whisper of hope, than despair took possession of my tortured heart, and I gave way to all its wild, its unholy dictates, until reason reeled on her throne, and my brain throbbed in agony.

I perused again and again my lover's epistle, its gentleness touched me more than the strongest remonstrances could have done, and rendered the writer dearer to me than ever. Here is the letter, which I have carefully preserved, though some of the words it contains were half effaced by my tears. It was long ere I could read it unmoved, but time blunts the arrows of affliction, or else it renders us more callous to their assaults.

"This letter will be given to you, dear, too dear Arabella, when I shall be many miles distant. You have commanded me to see you no more,

and I obey; my reluctance being only vanquished by the belief, that such a step, painful as it is to me, will best secure your future peace.

"When I saw you first, my heart was, as I imagined, dead to love. Your beauty, your fascination, soon convinced me of my error; but even when I discovered my weakness, I endeavoured to steel myself against the entertainment of a second affection, lest you, in all the pride of youth and beauty's first triumphs, should reject the offering of a heart, that had already experienced for another a deep, a true passion. But your gentleness, your apparent pity, rivetted the chains your charms had forged; and I placed my happiness in your hands, and dared again to indulge hope for the future. The consciousness of the strength of my new attachment, induced me to reveal to its object the sorrows created by a former one. I related them as the mariner when safe in a haven of rest narrates to the person most dear to him, the perils he has endured when absent from her, and for which he looks to her for consolation. I had no thought, no feeling concealed from you; and the extent of my confidence must have assured you of that of my affection. When mistress of every sentiment of my heart, judge of my bitter disappointment at discovering that your manner towards me became totally changed. Coldness and constraint usurped the place of confidence and sympathy; and I found myself compelled either to conceal the fond recollection of the dead, or to offend the living object of my tenderness. Such was my attachment to you, that I adopted the first alternative. I scrupulously avoided speaking of the past; and this anxiety not to displease you, led to a restraint that impaired, if it did not destroy, all the charm of our intercourse. Day after day I marked your increasing coldness; yet still I had not courage to depart; and by my absence rid you of communion that seemed to importune, rather than gratify you. You have broken the bond that united us; you, cruel Arabella, have pronounced the sentence of separation, and I leave you with every wound bleeding anew, opened by the hand that I once thought had closed them for ever. Pardon this intrusion, which you forbade; and may every happiness be yours.

"CLYDESDALE."

Lady Walsingham had frequently tried to gain admittance to my chamber during the long hours that had elapsed since I had shut myself in it; but I resisted all her entreaties to open the door, until a late hour in

the evening, when, exhausted by the effects of mental and bodily suffering, I allowed her to enter.

All the soothing attentions that an affectionate heart and feeling mind could offer, were showered on me by this amiable and most excellent woman; who bore the wayward petulance attendant on this my cruel and self-incurred disappointment, with a gentleness and patience that in some degree restored me to a sense of shame for my want of self-control. I reposed in her sympathizing breast all the circumstances which had led to the misunderstanding with Lord Clydesdale, anticipating that she would encourage the hope that still animated me, by whispering that he might return, and our union yet take place. But she held out no such delusive prospect; she had seen enough of him to be convinced, that the step he had taken was the result of a belief, that, however temporarily painful it might be, the separation was necessary to our mutual peace; and that therefore his determination would be immutable.

This conduct on the part of Lady Walsingham was as wise as it was merciful. By destroying hope, she disarmed love of its most potent ally: and after a few weeks, I learned to reflect on my disappointment with less bitterness; though, for years, it cast a cloud of melancholy over the sunshine of my young life, and is even still remembered with sadness. I tried to think that Lord Clydesdale and I were unsuited to each other, that our union could not have been productive of happiness; but, alas! conscience whispered that *he* was faultless, and that all the error was on *my* side.

Pride now reminded me, that, though with a bruised heart and wounded spirit, I was still called on to enact a part in the drama of life. I was a fair and wealthy heiress, on whom all eyes were fixed; and must not permit even the most insignificant of the herd who sought my society, to imagine, that any one who had been known to have worn my chains, could throw them off. Lord Clydesdale was universally considered to be my devoted admirer, but had never been publicly acknowledged as my accepted suitor; consequently, his departure was not likely to lead to any surmises derogatory to my dignity, unless I betrayed by any alteration in my general demeanour, that it affected me. What sacrifices does pride exact from her victims! sacrifices that less unworthy motives had never obtained. Reason—nay, religion itself, have rarely had such influence in quelling grief, or at least in checking its

external symptoms, as has this unbridled, this all-subduing passion. At its dictates the tear is dried, the sob is stifled, the sigh is sent back ere half breathed to the oppressed heart; the quiver of agony is banished from the lip, nay it is forced into the indication of a cheerful smile, and gaiety is assumed, while the heart is pining in anguish rendered more intolerable by the mockery to which its wretched owner is compelled.

In obedience to this all-commanding power, I schooled myself to appear more gay and careless than I had ever been at any previous period. Yet often did I start at the sound of my own laugh, to which my tortured breast seemed to render funereal echoes, as even while the smile played on my lip, my thoughts were far distant, wandering with him whose image was never banished from my heart. Frequently have I left a brilliant *réunion,* where I seemed to constitute the magnet of attraction, and retired to my solitary chamber to weep over the recollection of the past. No, there is no slavery so insupportable as that which we impose on ourselves to cheat those who perhaps care little for us, and for whom we care not.

Many of the persons whose attentions Lord Clydesdale's presence and assiduities had checked, now returned to importune me with them. Among those whose pretensions to please least annoyed, though they totally failed to interest me, were Il Principe di Monte Rosso, and his *fides Achates,* Il Duca di Carditella. Both these nobles professed a chivalrous adoration for me, worthy the days of romance, and displayed it *à la Napolitain.* They sang duets beneath my balcony at night; their boat followed mine in the evenings over the moonlit sea; and the lava of Vesuvius, their native volcano, whose flames their own for me professed to emulate, was offered to me in every shape into which the ingenuity of art could torture it, to remind me of their *tendresse.* Such was their attention to my comfort, though that was a word as unknown to their southern ears as the reality was to their habits, that on one occasion, when Lady Walsingham observed that the butter provided by our major domo was of a very objectionable quality, Il Principe declared that the superintendent of his villa sold the best butter in all the neighbourhood of Naples; and recommended it so zealously that we knew not precisely which he wished most to serve, his farmer or myself. Il Duca di Carditella frequently assured us that the wine sold by the porter at his Palazzo, and made from the vines on his estate, was superior to all other,

and even urged our servant to give it a trial. I figured to myself an English Duke puffing his own wine or butter to engage purchasers, and, above all, to the lady of his love; and could not resist smiling at the contrast between such conduct and the sonorous and ancient titles of the perpetrators. Whenever Il Principe sighed, and this was not seldom, Il Duca echoed: each compliment that one offered at the shrine of my beauty, and each profession of the profound sentiment which that beauty had excited, was repeated nearly verbatim by the other, without the least apparent embarrassment to either.

This modern Pylades and Orestes always came and departed together; and their mutual harmony seemed in no way impeded by the passion they professed to entertain for the same object. There was something so singular in this *brotherhood* in love, that though it failed to interest, it succeeded in sometimes amusing me.

One day when Il Principe was calling all the saints in the calendar, even St. Januarius himself, to witness how perfectly he adored me, and Il Duca was strenuously emulating him in his vows, I inquired, with as serious a face as I could assume, how, in case I should, by any possibility, (though I admitted not the probability of such an event), prefer one to the other, the rejected suitor could support the disappointment; or the accepted one be so selfish as to enjoy a boon of which his brother in love had been deprived.

"Let not such a reflection oppose a single obstacle to your decision, charming lady," exclaimed both, nearly in the same words, "for we have sworn that he who becomes your husband, shall select the other for your *cavalier servénte.*"

Strange to say, neither of my admirers seemed to be aware of having said aught that could either shock or surprise me; and would have considered any expression of such feelings on my part as a proof of northern barbarism and prejudice.

After visiting all the principal places of resort in Italy, and passing above four years in that beautiful land, we returned to our own country; with my notions of happiness considerably changed, and my hopes of attaining it, oh! how infinitely diminished; and yet my heart beat quicker too, when I found myself again on my native shore. I concluded that *he* who was so often and fondly recalled to memory must be there, that we should in all human probability meet: and what might not a meeting

accomplish between hearts that still loved? for, judging his by my own, I concluded that I still occupied a place in it. But, even should we *not* meet, was it not a blessing to inhabit the same country, breathe the same air, and know that a few hours might bring us together? Those only who have truly loved will comprehend this negative sort of happiness; but *they* will know that even this is eagerly grasped at, and will appreciate its effects on me.

I was now of age; and that important epoch was to be marked by *fêtes* and rejoicings at Walsingham Castle, where I was to receive my neighbours, and feast my tenantry and dependents. Previous to going there, Lady Walsingham and I accepted an invitation to the rectory of her brother, who, with his pretty wife and three rosy cheeked children, we found in the enjoyment of as much happiness as, perhaps, was ever permitted to mortals. I might also add as much health, if that advantage was not an essential requisite in the other blessing, there being no happiness without it. The fact was, the felicity accorded to this excellent couple had been so wholly free from anxiety, or any of the trials to which persons of susceptible natures are liable, that the result had been an increase of *embonpoint* to both; more indicative of rude health than advantageous to beauty.

On looking at Frederick Melville, the once pale, interesting, but now lusty and fresh coloured father of a family, I could scarcely forbear a smile at the recollection of my former girlish predilection for him. How inferior, how immeasurably inferior was he to Lord Clydesdale, in appearance as well as in manner. This alteration in his looks, but still more, the total change in my own taste and opinions, led me to reflect on the folly of permitting girls to marry the first object that attracts their juvenile fancy; without allowing a reasonable time to elapse, in order that the stability of the sentiment may be ascertained. How few young women would at twenty select the admirer as a partner for life who might have captivated them at seventeen? and how many of the desperate passions, supposed to be eternal, would fade away like a dream before the influence of reason, if subjected to the ordeal of a couple, or of even one year's absence.

The happiness of Frederick Melville and his wife was much too unimaginative and commonplace for my refined notions. The *ideal* coloured every vision I formed of domestic life, and entered into every

scheme of enjoyment. I shrank from the realities of actual existence to revel in day dreams; and in the superabundance of my folly recoiled from the possibility of ever finding myself reduced to the level of Mrs. Melville, a homely, busy, but most happy wife. Their daily occupations and simple pleasures seemed insipid and tiresome to me. Their intellectual recreations were limited to the *utile,* rather than to the exalted and elegant in literature; and their routine of usefulness, and absence of high thought, the epithet with which I dignified the sentiments engendered by study of poetry and belle lettres, allowed the countenances of both to wear an habitual expression of cheerfulness rather than of sensibility.

In the vanity of self-imagined superiority, I fancied my mind to be of a too elevated character to be content with a blameless lot like theirs; erroneously believing the morbid fastidiousness of my ill-directed feelings, to be an indubitable proof of this supposed superiority, when it clearly indicated precisely the reverse: as the factitious bodily force sometimes exhibited in delirium, is, by the ignorant, mistaken for constitutional strength.

When, after a morning passed in the perusal of my favourite authors, among whom the most romantic school of poets were the preferred, I have found Mrs. Melville, with health glowing on her cheek, and the vivacity it inspires beaming in her eyes, returned from visiting the poor, or superintending her domestic arrangements, I have pitied her destiny, and almost despised the mind that could be happy under it. The vigorous discharge of actual duties, I was as indisposed to comprehend, as unwilling to perform; consequently, I undervalued those who did both. Great sacrifices, I fancied, I should heroically make; but the minor ones, which we are constantly called on to offer, and for which no praise is given, appeared to me to be beneath my attention. It is thus that too many people console themselves for leaving unfulfilled the numerous duties, the discharge of which cheer and sweeten life, while the great sacrifice they suppose themselves ready to make, is perhaps never required. To preside over a husband's household, attend to his personal comforts, nurse his children, visit the poor, pray *with*, and work *for* them, and receive him always with joyful *smiles*, was, in my opinion, to become that most uninteresting of all creatures, a homely housewife. Consequently, I deemed that it argued ill for the taste and refinement of

Frederick Melville, that his attachment to his wife seemed to increase in proportion to her indefatigable discharge of this dull and vulgar routine of duties.

I had figured the Parsonage to myself as an old-fashioned house, modernised into a simple, but elegant villa, with myrtles, woodbine, and roses, peeping into each window. The furniture light, tasteful, and luxurious:—no splendour, but all that persons of refined habits could require. The picture I formed, comprised a small but most comfortable drawing-room, opening into a conservatory redolent of sweets—a library containing the choicest authors—a boudoir, with all its fairy elegancies, and an Æolian harp placed in its window, to catch the sighing of the night breeze on its strings. I fancied all the decorations peculiar to female taste, and all the graceful implements indicative of feminine occupation. Each apartment was to be filled with rare flowers, and the presiding deity, simply, but most becomingly attired, was to languidly, but sweetly, do the honours of this imaginary little Paradise; repaying her husband for a thousand nameless attentions not by the bustling activity of a housekeeper, but by the gentle smiles and soft words peculiar to heroines in novels.

This was the picture my fancy had drawn of Addlethorp Rectory; though the name had always jarred on my ear, and suggested the necessity of bestowing on the spot a more euphonious denomination. The married lovers must, according to my notions, in the constant communion of thought and study, have grown somewhat paler, and more pensive—that palor arising from deep thought, and that pensiveness which excess of happiness produces on high-toned minds, by making them tremble for its duration.

How, then, were my expectations disappointed by the reality of Addlethorp Rectory and its owners! Instead of a modernized villa, a square, red brick, mansion met my view. No myrtles, woodbine, or roses, peeped into the windows; and the green boxes of mignonette which supplied their places, odorous though they were, seemed to me, to be but a sorry substitute. The garden into which the windows of the principal rooms opened, might have satisfied even my fastidious taste; but those rooms sadly shocked my notions of elegance and comfort—shining oak panels, and book cases to correspond, stowed with volumes of no rich hues of binding, were its most conspicuous features. No

mirrors were to be seen, and no silk draperies met the eye; but white dimity curtains, with chairs, and a sofa that seemed to have been made before the possibility of reclining in it had been taken into consideration; for its form and texture defied such a position. A work table, on which was placed a basket well filled with non-descript pieces of linen, ycleped plain work, and all the homely apparatus of a village sempstress, lay by it.

To be sure, the room was scrupulously clean and cheerful, and wanted nothing for positive use, though it contained no article for mere ornament. Still, its rustic plainness struck me as being disagreeable; and the increased plumpness and gaiety of its owners, shocked my preconceived notions. The whole house and its arrangement were equally plain and simple. Every thing was perfectly clean, but all of the cheapest texture and most simple form. I could have fancied myself in the dwelling of some primitive quaker, who disdained ornament or elegance: yet never had I beheld in the most splendid saloons, rich in all that unbounded wealth and refined taste could lavish on them, such happy faces as in the homely parlour of Addlethorp rectory.

The conversation of the rector and his wife was little calculated to excite any interest in a mind teeming with all the morbid sentiments that filled mine. To hear that old Farmer Brookby's health was much amended; Dame Gateby's leg not broken, as was supposed; and poor Martha Dobson's case not so hopeless as was feared, only excited in me *ennui* and dissatisfaction, while this intelligence created in Mr. and Mrs. Melville the most lively interest. The rapid progress which her pupils at the charity school were making; the good qualities of the curate and his wife; and thankfulness to Providence for having placed her lot among such good people, were the themes most frequently chosen by Mrs. Melville, while she plied her needle; little aware how callous a listener she had for her "short and simple annals of the poor;" but to which Lady Walsingham lent no cold ear.

"I see no harp here," said I, one day, to Mrs. Melville, during our short *séjour* in the parsonage—"I remember you excelled on that instrument."

"It is an expensive acquisition," replied she; "and as I have a pianoforte, I thought it more prudent not to purchase a harp. Besides, the truth is, I should not have had time to practice; for what with my

household avocations, my children, my school, my garden, and, though last not least, my poor, I find little spare time for music."

"But does not all this daily recurrence of occupation weary and depress you? *I* should soon sink under it, I am sure."

"O! dear, no; on the contrary, it keeps me more cheerful; for the consciousness of endeavouring to fulfil one's duties, exhilarates the spirits."

"But do you not feel very solitary and dull, when Mr. Melville is compelled to be absent?"

"It is true, I miss his presence very much at the hours at which we are accustomed to meet; but I have so many things to attend to, that I have not leisure to be dull. Besides, I look forward with such delight to his return, and have so many little preparations to make to welcome him, that this occupation alone would sustain my cheerfulness."

"May I, without being indiscreet, inquire in what consist these preparations?"

"In a thousand trifling things, which, though trifling, nevertheless, have a lively interest for those who are fondly attached to each other."

Come, come, thought I to myself, all the romance of love is not yet over. Here, amid all the duties, I shall hear of some little schemes of pleasure, some delicate attentions, such as placing fresh flowers in his room; or surprising him with some unexpected little gift of affection. Yes, yes, housewife as she is, she is still a woman at heart, and has not forgotten all the sentiment of love.

"But you have not yet told me your preparations," resumed I.

"Well, then, to commence. Imprimis: I make some new article of dress for him: shirts, cravats, bands, gown, or, in short, any thing he may require; and which I know he will wear with double pleasure as being made by me. I teach the baby some new word, and the eldest a hymn that he will like to hear. I copy out, in a large hand, some of his sermons; prepare different little articles of confectionary to which he is partial, and endeavour, as well as I can, to supply his place to his parishioners—thus occupied, time passes imperceptibly."

"But do your thoughts never revert to a more gay life, to a more brilliant position?"

"Never, I assure you; who would not prefer happiness to gaiety, and comfort to splendour? I possess both; and most thankful am I for such inestimable blessings."

"It has occurred to me more than once since I have been here, dear Mrs. Melville, that your dwelling might be rendered more elegant—more worthy of its inmates."

"I am sorry you do not like Addlethorp Rectory, we are very partial to it; and no wonder, we have been so happy here"—and she looked around, as if she loved the very walls, and the clumsy, tasteless furniture.

"You mistake me, dear Mrs. Melville; I do not dislike your residence; I only wish it possessed more elegance—more of those luxurious comforts that one sees in the generality of houses. For instance, I would have the red brick front that makes one hot to look at it, concealed by parasitical plants. This apartment should be enlarged by two projecting bay windows, opening into the garden. That settee should give place to a comfortable lounger sofa, well lined with eiderdown pillows; two bergères should fill up the space occupied by yonder straight backed chairs, that forbid ease; a carpet of such an ample pile, that no footstep could be heard to fall on it, should replace this one, and a mirror or two should reflect back the treasures of the garden. A sober tinted silk should form the curtains and covers of the chairs and sofa, instead of that cold and cheerless looking white dimity; and a few light and elegant tables and consoles with richly bound books scattered over them, should give the finish."

"The room would doubtless gain much by your proposed change of decoration, dear Lady Arabella; but would it then be as suitable for the wife of a minister of the gospel?"

"Do you then imagine that elegance is incompatible with religion?"

"By no means; I only think that a clergyman and his wife should set the example of humility to those with whom example has more effect than precept; and that lessons on the advantages of that virtue from the pulpit, might fail to make the desired impression, if the residence of the preacher was known to abound in those luxuries against an indulgence in which he warned his hearers. But, independent of this motive, the expense of the alterations you suggest would offer an insuperable objection."

"I imagined that Mr. Melville's benefice brought in a considerable revenue."

"So it does; one amply sufficient to gratify our simple tastes, enable us to ameliorate the condition of our poor parishioners, and lay by a modest provision for our children. But were we to indulge in the expensive luxuries you propose, our means, ample as they are, would be inadequate to these objects; and the fine things you speak of would only serve to reproach us for the sacrifice of our duties and principles, at the shrine of a vanity which in us would be worldly and culpable. It is very natural for Lady Arabella Walsingham, born and nursed in the bosom of wealth and splendour, to think the elegancies of life to which she has ever been accustomed essentially necessary to her personal comfort; but for us, their absence is no privation."

"*Chacun a son goût,*" thought I, by no means satisfied with the result of my suggestions.

"But you have not told me," resumed I, "why you do not conceal the red brick front of the house, by parasitical plants?"

"Merely because they engender insects that fill the rooms and annoy the children."

"What," thought I, "submit to behold that fiery looking front, staring one in the face, when it might be concealed, because the plants breed insects that annoy children; really this is being very considerate."

I knew not the heart of a mother; I was unworthy of such a boon; and in my egotistical vanity, believed myself, with all my overweening selfishness, superior to the excellent person before me.

I left Addlethorp Rectory without regret; and during my journey to Walsingham Castle, listened silently to Lady Walsingham's occasional comments on the happiness of her brother and his family; a happiness so little suited to my taste as to create no envy in my breast.

Every inn where we stopped to change horses during the last day of our route poured forth its inmates to stare at and welcome the owner of Walsingham Castle. At a few miles distance from it, a cavalcade of the tenantry, headed by my steward, met me; and, notwithstanding my resistance, unharnessed the horses and drew the carriage to my paternal home, amid the joyful acclamations of a vast concourse of people.

I had not seen this abode since my infancy, and retained no recollection of it; consequently its feudal splendour now struck me with

delight. A flag emblazoned with the Walsingham arms proudly floated from the ramparts; the bells of three neighbouring churches tolled merrily, and the wives and daughters of my tenantry, attired in their Sunday clothes, stood courtesying to the ground, while they offered *bouquets* of flowers, enough to have filled at least a dozen carriages. A new sense of my own importance was now added to my other vanities. I looked proudly around me, acknowledging by dignified bows the homage that was offered to me.

How easy it is for the rich to make themselves beloved! A few gracious smiles had already won the hearts of those good people, who rent the air with shouts of applause. When I entered the hall, I paused, overcome with delight, at the grandeur of its appearance. Coats of mail, helmets, shields, and arms, crowned with the armorial banners of the family, were ranged along its lofty walls; and an oriel window of ancient stained glass, through which the setting sun threw its bright rays, diffused a variety of the most gorgeous hues over the polished steel of the armour, and the marble pavement of the hall. Here were assembled the grey-headed servitors of my father, with good Mistress Mary at their head, all blessing and welcoming me to my home. I fancied myself invested with an accession of height, as with a stately assumption of dignity that would not have shamed La Dame Chatelaine of a melo-drama, I walked through the long train of retainers, dispensing nods and smiles around; and ascended the flight of marble steps that led to the principal suite of state rooms.

Here new delight awaited me. Apartments of vast proportions, furnished in a style of unrivalled magnificence, the walls glowing with the most admirable productions of the Italian school, met my view. I seemed to be some heroine of romance, long banished, but at length restored to her hereditary rights; and, as my glad eyes gleamed around, I was ready to exclaim, "And all this is mine—really mine!"

Yet, even at that moment, when inflated by pride and vanity, I gloried in my possessions, memory recurred to *him* whom I once hoped would have shared with me the possession of this splendid castle; and I would have almost resigned it to have had my hand placed in his, and to have had a right to call him mine. Such were the thoughts that flashed across my mind, as I slowly paced through the *enfilade* of apartments, until I came to one of less vast proportion, and of more modern decoration.

There hung the portraits of my father and mother; and, as my eyes fell on his mild and benevolent face, which seemed to welcome me to my ancestral home, a flood of gushing tears relieved the oppression that impeded my breathing. This pensive and dear countenance reminded me for the first time since I entered the castle of Lady Walsingham. I blushed crimson at the recollection of this ungracious and egotistical proof of my negligence; and, turning, I found her pale and melancholy; her eyes, too, fixed on the portrait of him who would have welcomed her more kindly than did the daughter who owed so much to his widow. I pressed Lady Walsingham to my heart in silence; and she as mutely dried her tears, and returned my embrace.

"I have not yet bidden you welcome to *our* home, dear mother," said I, "may it ever prove as happy a one as *he* would have rendered it;" and I looked on his portrait.

"When you have selected a Lord for this castle, dear Arabella," replied she, "I shall seek another home: until then, your home shall be mine."

A suite of rooms had been, by my instructions, prepared for Lady Walsingham, filled with every object that I thought likely to conduce to her comfort. Nothing that taste or elegance could suggest was left undone by the upholsterer that had taken my orders; nor was he less attentive to those which related to my own apartments. All the classical decorations that I had ever admired in Italy or praised in France, joined to the exquisite neatness and comfort peculiar to England, were here united; and, as I examined the details and enjoyed the *ensemble,* I was not a little elated.

I stood before a vast mirror, half draped by the pale blue silk hangings with rich silver fringes that lined the walls of my dressing-room; and, as I contemplated my own image, vanity whispered, that even without the immense wealth and high nobility which I possessed, that form and face might well aspire to captivate. As I gazed on my mirror, I almost questioned the possibility of any man whose heart was not already occupied, resisting my powers of attraction; until memory reminded me that *he* whom alone I wished to fix had thrown off my chains the moment they pressed too heavily on him; and this reflection checked the over-weening self-complacency in which I was indulging.

I spent six months at Walsingham Castle receiving from and giving a succession of *fêtes* to the whole neighbourhood. I found myself an object

of universal attraction, and, as I make no doubt, of envy; though the demonstrations of it were so skilfully concealed that I was unconscious of the existence of the sentiment. The young ladies all copied my dress, the most indisputable proof of female admiration; and the elderly ones, more especially those who had unmarried sons or nephews, plied me with all the delicate attentions and adroit flatteries with which match-making dames assail wealthy heiresses. Never, however, for a moment did I now doubt that my own personal claims to admiration were not the cause of the homage I received.

My vanity increased with the food continually administered to its craving appetite; and, in proportion to this increase, was my astonishment that Lord Clydesdale had the self controul to free himself from my chains. Yet the knowledge that he had done so, though it wounded my *amour propre* and still rankled at my heart, impressed me with a high opinion of his strength of mind, rather than with any suspicion of my own weakness.

How I longed to meet him again, and once more to subjugate his heart; for it seemed a reproach to my powers of captivation, that he *could* fly from me. Every object that pleased, every point of view that charmed me, were thought of with a reference to *how he* would approve them. I associated his beloved image with every scene around me; and almost cheated myself into believing that we might yet be united.

It was this delusive hope that caused me to rejoice when the time came for leaving Walsingham Castle; believing that in the metropolis my encounter with Lord Clydesdale was inevitable.

With a heart beating with joyful anticipation I again found myself in London; and those anticipations seemed on the eve of being realised when I read the announcement of Lord Clydesdale's arrival in town. When I drove through the streets, I fancied every tall distinguished looking man must be him. I looked for him in vain at the opera; and never accepted an invitation without expecting to meet him. Still, day after day passed away, and I saw him not!

"Where could he be?" was a question I asked myself every night, as fatigued and dispirited I sought my couch; but the question was an enigma beyond my power of solving.

Well has it been said, that "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" mine was sick. But as my hope of meeting Lord Clydesdale faded away,

my desire to encounter him became more ungovernable. It had now grown to be the object of my daily thoughts—my nightly dreams. A meeting must, as I fancied, inevitably lead to a reconciliation, and a renewal of our engagement. One glance would explain all; and no false pride on my part should prevent a perfect *éclaircissement*. Yes, I would avow my faults, and atone for them; and all would yet be well, could we but meet.

An invitation to dine at the Duchesse of Mellincourt's had been accepted by Lady Walsingham and I. As the day approached, I wished to find an excuse for declining it, for my spirits were depressed by the continual disappointment of not seeing him, whom alone I wished to behold.—Two days previous to the dinner, I met the Duchesse of Mellincourt at Lady Fotheringay's; when, alluding to the dinner engagement, she mentioned that Lord Clydesdale was to meet us at her house. I found it difficult to repress the emotion this news excited; I felt inclined to embrace her in the joy that filled my heart; and I went home to indulge once more in dreams of happiness, and to study a toilette that should set off my person to the utmost advantage.

Never had I bestowed so much attention on this, to most women, momentous subject. Long did I waver between a robe of pale rose or cerulean blue; but at length I decided that simple, but always elegant, white should be the toilette, with delicate pink and silver bows on the robe and in my hair, and pearls for my neck and arms. I thought the time would never arrive, so slowly did it seem to creep: I went to dress full two hours before my usual period; repeatedly changed the arrangement of my hair, and indefatigably consulted my mirror, to be assured that all was right.

We were among the first guests that arrived at the Duchess's. I almost feared to raise my eyes lest they should too suddenly encounter him whom they languished to behold. Guest after guest arrived, and as the groom of the chambers announced each aristocratic name, I listened with painful eagerness to hear his pronounced.

When at length the Maitre d'Hotel's notice *que le dîner est servi* summoned us to table, and that I saw the guests seated, I looked anxiously to observe whether there was a vacant place; and experienced a bitter sense of disappointment at finding every seat occupied. My joyful anticipation and *recherché* toilette were then all in vain; he who

occasioned the one, and to please whom, the other was studied and adopted, came not. I could have wept over this cruel disappointment, but pride came to my aid; and while my heart was tortured I forced a smile to my lips, and compelled myself to answer the common-place questions addressed to me by the persons around me.

Talk of Spartan stoicism, what is it compared to that which a proud woman is obliged to assume when in the midst of society she finds herself "a cynosure for curious eyes," with the painful consciousness, that were one tear of those, that are struggling to gush forth, suffered to be visible, she should become the object, not of general interest and sympathy, but of idle or malevolent curiosity, and occasion countless false and injurious rumours. Of how many pangs does this knowledge quell every external symptom, how many tears are suppressed and sighs stilled, until in the privacy of her own chamber, unseen by mortal eye, a free vent can be given to them. And yet people call women weak and destitute of self-control!

When dinner was nearly over Lady Hallifax, who sat opposite to me, observed to one of the party, that she expected to have met Lord Clydesdale.

"I saw him yesterday," continued she, "and he mentioned that he was to dine here today. I told him that he would meet Lady Walsingham and Lady Arabella, who I knew were friends of his, for Lady Walsingham had told me they knew him in Italy. But I must not make either of you ladies blush by repeating the very high eulogiums he bestowed upon both, and eulogiums from Lord Clydesdale are not indiscriminately given, for he is the most fastidious person possible."

"I received an excuse from him this morning," replied the Duchess of Mellincourt, "stating that he was suffering under a violent headache."

"I fancy he is grown a little hypochondriacal of late," said Lady Ardenfield; "for he sent similar excuses to Lady Mordaunt's and to Lord William Crofts, and I saw him the day after each dinner in apparently perfect health."

How I writhed while listening to this statement; I had dined at both the parties to which Lady Ardenfield referred; and it now became obvious to me, that he had absented himself from them, and also from the Duchess of Mellincourt's to avoid meeting me. Had I then become an object of such distaste to him that he could not bear to encounter me;

or did his reluctance proceed from a dread of again exposing his heart to the power of my fascinations? Need I tell my own sex which supposition gained belief in my mind? Yes; I now became convinced that he still retained too tender a feeling towards me, to admit of his trusting himself in my presence; and this belief consoled me in some degree for the disappointment occasioned by his absence. But then came the reflection, that if thus carefully bent on avoiding me, how was I to meet him? and my hopes became faint, and my spirits again sank at the prospect of days passed in vain expectation, and nights in as vain regrets —I thought the evening interminable. The commonplace observations exchanged in the drawing-room, the lackadaisical compliments by the men, and the simpering complacency with which they were received by the women, appeared to me to be more than usually insipid. I offended more than one of the satellites that hovered round me by my total inattention to their *petits soins*; and had I not been an heiress as well as a belle, might have risked loosing my popularity. But heiresses have been from time immemorial privileged persons, and my abstraction and *brusquerie* were, therefore pronounced to be *très piquant,* and quite delightful when compared with the over anxious civilities of the portionless young ladies who abound in every society.

Day after day, and week after week rolled away, bringing with them the same dull round of engagements that the upper circles mis-name amusements; and yet I never caught even a passing glance of Lord Clydesdale—still his image occupied my thoughts by day, and my dreams by night. I longed to question those acquainted with him, whether he was still in London; but I feared to betray my emotion, even while making the demand, and consequently refrained from inquiry. His pertinacity in avoiding me, seemed only to have excited an increased desire on my part to behold him again; and the facility with which I accomplished every other object, rendered my defeat in this, the dearest of all, more difficult to be borne. I became daily more imperious, more capricious, and unamiable. Yet this inequality of temper and haughtiness of manner, deterred not a numerous train of suitors from endeavouring to propitiate me. The perfect indifference I manifested to all, inspired each individual with hopes of rendering himself agreeable by submission and perseverance: but angered by their want of spirit and tact I severely tested their powers of forbearance. It was however proof

against all the trials to which I subjected it; until unqualified rejections left them no room for hope, and restored to me the peace which their importunities had ruffled.

Notwithstanding all my vanity, I shrewdly suspected that my fortune had a greater influence over these pretenders to my hand, than the personal attractions, relative to which they paid me such florid compliments. This suspicion offended my *amour propre*; and I avenged its humiliation by a contemptuous negligence of manner towards my suitors that might, if it had been adopted by Penelope of old, have enabled her to have sooner rid herself of her more troublesome ones. But my Ulysses came not to relieve me from mine; so I was compelled to dismiss them *in propria persona*. When they discovered the impartiality I displayed towards them, they unanimously joined in decrying me. I was pronounced to be a proud, capricious, and heartless woman who never had, or never could, love any creature but self! and whose fortune, large as it was, would be insufficient to make amends for my ill temper. Lady Walsingham and I heard of their revengeful strictures from many sources. She wished that I could have behaved with more politeness to them; adding, that it was always considered that the highest compliment a man could pay to a woman, was to demand her hand.

"Yes, my dear Lady Walsingham," have I answered, "provided he does not demand also the large fortune that appertains to that hand. A portionless demoiselle has reason to consider it a compliment when a man solicits to become her husband, because she must know, that he can have no pecuniary motive. But those needy aspirants who seek to prop up their falling fortune by that of an heiress, deserve no ceremony from her, and no pity from others, when they are foiled in their mercenary speculations."

How infinitely high did Lord Clydesdale rise in my estimation when I contrasted his conduct with theirs. Alas! every man who tried to render himself agreeable to me, lost even the claims he possessed to become so, when judged by a comparison with him who was my *beau idéal* of perfection.

At length the season drew to a close, and it became necessary to determine where the autumn and winter should be passed. I should have proposed a return to France and Italy, but that some spell seemed still to

attach me to the country that *he* inhabited. I therefore determined to remain in England; and to pass the ensuing months in a round of visits to the various houses to which we were invited.

About this period, I began to remark the frequent visits of Lord Westonville, a nobleman of an agreeable exterior and gentlemanly manners, but of reserved habits. He, among all the men who hovered round me, was the only one who did not appear to offer homage or make any effort to conciliate my favour. This seeming indifference, while it gave me a better opinion of him, as compared with my suitors, served also to excite a certain degree of interest or curiosity relative to him.

"What then," thought I, on observing the frequency of his calls, and "the lingering, coy delay" with which he continued to prolong their duration, "he, too, like all the others, aspires to please the rich heiress. Poor man! he, too, will share their fate; and subject himself to the mortification of a refusal, as soon as he has declared himself in form."

And yet there was something so amiable about him, that *malgré* my woman's vanity, I wished to spare him the humiliation of a rejection, by preventing him from placing himself in the position of receiving one. I therefore increased the coldness of my manner towards him, to the utmost extent to which politeness permits its votaries to go.

Yet, strange to say, his visits continued to be as frequent as before; and, still more strange, he appeared wholly regardless of my *hauteur.* He seemed perfectly consoled for my taciturnity, by the unaffected cheerfulness of Lady Walsingham's conversation; and I concluded, that discovering my distaste to his attentions, he had transferred a portion of them towards her, for the purpose of conciliating her influence in his favour. I smiled internally, at anticipating the disappointment that awaited him; and expected every day to hear my stepmother commence a covert plan of attack, by praising the knight, whose cause she seemed to encourage, if not espouse. Still she said nothing; and my curiosity became more piqued. Unable to repress it, I one day remarked to her, that Lord Westonville had now become the most constant and assiduous of our visitors.

"I hope his presence is not disagreeable to you, my dear Arabella," replied Lady Walsingham, looking somewhat embarrassed.

"Ho, ho," thought I, "now I shall hear what I have so long been expecting. It is evident she wishes that I should be favourably disposed towards him."

"Why, as to being disagreeable to me, *ma chère belle mère,*" answered I, "as long as he chooses to confine his attentions to mere friendship, I can have no objection to his visits; but beyond that, I acknowledge that they would not be acceptable."

"I rather feared so," said Lady Walsingham; "and this fear has had great weight with me. Still I hoped, that when better acquainted with Lord Westonville, who is really an estimable man, you might have conquered your repugnance. Your feelings, of course, my dear Arabella, have the greatest weight with me."

"In a case like the present they are doubtless of the utmost importance," replied I.

"Am I then to conclude that such a union would be painful to you?" asked Lady Walsingham; "because, in that case, I would at once put an end to his hopes."

"Such a union is quite out of the question; and the sooner you tell him so, the better."

"But, surely some delicacy is due to his feelings; his proposals have been so generous, so—"

"Really, my dear Lady Walsingham, I cannot discover the generosity. Ladies with large fortunes of their own, can seldom, if ever, experience any great generosity on the part of their suitors."

"I perceive that your dislike to Lord Westonville is insurmountable," said *ma belle mère,* and therefore I shall not accept his hand."

"Not accept his hand!—good heavens, you astonish me—I had no idea—you have taken me quite by surprise," replied I, totally forgetful, at the moment, what a silly figure I must make by avowing the error into which my vanity had plunged me. "Then Lord Westonville's views are directed to *you*?"

"I have only lately been aware of his predilection," answered Lady Walsingham; "but I should never have permitted his attentions, had I imagined that your feelings were so repugnant to my accepting him. I never have been, never can be, unmindful of all that I owe to you and your excellent father," resumed she; "and ill would it become me to bestow my hand on one who, however irreproachable, had inspired you

with a sentiment of dislike, that might interrupt the harmony that has ever subsisted between us, or prevent my acting as hitherto, as your chaperon, companion, and friend."

When I looked at the beautiful woman before me, I could hardly understand how I had been so blind to her great personal attractions, of which habit alone could have rendered me forgetful. My own overweening vanity had also helped towards this obliviousness; and, truth to say, the idea of her exciting admiration, or love, when I was present, seemed to me to be as wholly out of the question as if she were old and ugly, instead of being still young and beautiful.

I felt ashamed to avow the mistake into which my egregious vanity had hurried me; and Lady Walsingham, who was occupied with her own thoughts, appeared not to have observed it. Making an effort to conceal my embarrassment, I embraced her, and murmured something about my repugnance being caused wholly by the dread of parting from her.

"I expected that you would have felt this regret, my dearest Arabella; indeed, I should have been hurt if you had not. Yet, let me assure you that if my marriage was to separate me from you, before yours had more naturally led to this result, I should never have had courage to contemplate such a measure. But, with so many suitors, it is impossible that you should not select some one on whom to bestow your hand; and when that hour arrives, my continued residence beneath your roof would not be necessary; and, certainly, would not be agreeable to your husband."

"Talk not to me of an event that is now never likely to occur. You know the cruel disappointment my own folly has occasioned me; a disappointment, the effects of which have not yet ceased to be felt with bitterness. But no more of that—I shall never marry. Yet, I must not, therefore, permit you to renounce a union that secures you a protector and companion for life. No! that would be too selfish."

"I had determined," resumed Lady Walsingham, "on informing Lord Westonville that I should, with his permission, take a year to consider his proposals; not, however, holding him bound to any engagement, though I should deem myself excluded from entertaining any other proposition of a similar nature during that period. If his attachment be as sincere as I am willing to believe, he will not object to so reasonable a

plan; and within that period my *chaperonage* for you, dear Arabella, may be no longer necessary."

"I see by the smile on your lips, *ma belle mère,* that you are incredulous with regard to my determination of leading a life of single blessedness. But time will prove that this resolution is a firm one; and, *en attendant,* I do not see why you should compel Lord Westonville to the probation of a year, satisfied as you already are that he is amiable, sensible, and suitable; in fact, to exhaust all the panegyrical *bles,* unexceptiona*ble.* If his lordship will condescend to pass a few months of every year at my *chateau,* and receive me as a guest at his, I may still enjoy all the advantages of your *chaperonage,* with the addition and acquisition of his Lordship's protection to the *belle fille* of his wife. I promise to be as amiable a hostess as possible to him, and as little troublesome a guest as may be. Do pray, dear Lady Walsingham, adopt my plan; it is much more reasonable than yours; and I am sure Lord Westonville will thank me for the suggestion."

People are always willing to follow advice when it accords with their own wishes; Lady Walsingham's pointed towards the counsel I gave, and it required only a little perseverance on my part, and the display of Lord Westonville's impatience, to determine her to yield.

The truth was, that being still in the bloom of life, with a natural timidity of disposition which led her to seek protection and companionship, it was not to be wondered at, that, finding a man of high station, prepossessing appearance, cultivated mind, and agreeable manners, who preferred her to any of the reigning belles of the day with whom he could not have failed to have found favour, she was disposed to accept his hand.

Time, that omnipotent effacer of *eternal* passions, had obliterated the youthful one of *ma belle mère*; or, if not wholly obliterated, had left only a pensive recollection of it, that could in no degree interfere with the duties or happiness of a wedded state. Her position, even in the lifetime of my dear father, had never been one of perfect ease; for, though treated by him with consideration and kindness, the absence of all warmer feelings towards her in his heart must have made her continually sensible that to his love for me alone she owed the station to which he had elevated her. This consciousness, operating on a very timid disposition, served to render her more like a governess than a mistress of

the house. Indeed, she never acted as such, exercising no authority, and confining herself to a scrupulous attention to my poor father's personal comforts and my improvement.

After his death, she sank into the timid and retiring companion, instead of assuming that influential dignity to which, as my father's widow, she was entitled. It was, consequently, but natural that she should listen with complacency to the offer now made to her, the acceptance of which would secure her a protector and companion for life; and he who aspired to her hand being in every way so unexceptionable a *parti,* that few women would have rejected him, or have felt otherwise than flattered by his preference.

Though no one could be more sensible of Lady Walsingham's merits and attractions than myself, still so occupied had my mind lately been by the conviction of my own supremacy, that I never expected that any man could bestow aught more than the tribute of an evanescent admiration on her inferior charms, when he had an opportunity of contemplating mine; and, consequently, when I paused before the mirror, and complacently gazed on the image it reflected, I confess that some pity, as well as surprise, was mingled in the opinion I formed of Lord Westonville's taste, or rather, according to my notions, want of taste.

I began, in spite, however, of this egotistical delusion, again for the first time to believe that my charms were not so extremely irresistible as I had hitherto imagined them to be; and this belief awakened some salutary reflections in my mind. Would that I had encouraged them! they might have saved me from some follies and more regrets. But, like most vain people, I silenced the admonitions of reason, and continued to cherish an overweening self admiration.

Fearing that I had revealed to my stepmother the weakness of having supposed that I was the object of Lord Westonville's preference, I anxiously watched to discover to what extent she had detected me. But such was the simplicity of mind and singleness of heart of this excellent woman, that I really believe the circumstance had quite escaped her; or if it had not, her manner conveyed no symptom of her having observed it. A vain woman would have not only quickly discovered my mistake, but would have as quickly let me see that she had made the discovery, by resenting the implied slight to her attractions, and ridiculing the erroneous estimate of my own.

But Lady Walsingham was not a vain woman; and consequently, had no incentive either to detect the vanity of others, or to reap a triumph for her own. How many of our sex, who would otherwise have been estimable, have had their noblest qualities sullied by this one, but engrossing passion, which, "like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest;" rendering them eager to quarrel with the vanity of every other human being, in order to avenge the jealousy and *exigeance* of their own. How often do we hear women exclaim, "I cannot support Lady So and So, or Mrs. So and So, she is so intolerably vain;" never recollecting that this anger furnishes the most irrefragable proof that they possess in no ordinary degree the very quality they condemn; for it is an indisputable fact, that only vain people wage war against the vanity of others.

But to quit this digression and return to my story. It was agreed that the nuptials of Lord Westonville with *ma belle mère* should be solemnized at Walsingham Castle in three months; and that the intervening period should be passed in a round of visits. When I beheld the regret with which Lord Westonville quitted his future bride the morning of our departure from London, a sentiment almost amounting to envy, took possession of my mind. *She* was cared for, *her* absence was lamented, and her presence desired; while I was, as it were, alone in the world, necessary to no one, and left to support as best I might, the humiliating consciousness of my isolated state.

Never until Lady Walsingham's engagement with Lord Westonville had I imagined myself as otherwise than an enviable person. My position, my beauty and fortune, and the crowd of admirers which these advantages drew around me, had induced me to believe that I was the magnet of general attraction; and had only to extend a gracious smile to any of my adorers in order to behold him at my feet. But now my feelings were changed. The homage and respectful tenderness I saw lavished on Lady Walsingham by her accepted suitor, a homage offered in as seemingly total an obliviousness of my presence as if I were not in existence, wounded my *amour propre* so extremely, that I was almost disposed to look favourably upon some one of the individuals, whose addresses I had so superciliously rejected but a short time previously, in order to secure to myself a similar devotion.

Such is the strange inconsistency of human nature, verifying the truth of the lines of our inspired bard—

"O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another's eyes."

The first visit we paid, was to the seat of the Marquis of Doncaster, in the eyes of whose fastidious Marchioness I had been so fortunate as to find favour; a distinction rarely accorded even to the most meritorious, and consequently sought with greater avidity by those who valued it as many other worthless objects are valued, for its rarity.

The Marquis was a dull, pompous, but not an ill tempered man. Naturally disposed to entertain a very high opinion of himself and his possessions, this feeling had been encouraged by the partner he had selected to share them; until he had arrived at that happy, though not unfrequent state of mind, in which people are so wholly engrossed by self as to become totally oblivious of others, except in relation to themselves. The Marchioness of Doncaster never for a moment forgot that she was of ancient descent, possessed immense wealth, and arrogated great importance; neither was she disposed to permit any one else to forget these distinctions. The slightest symptom of a want of recollection on these points produced an increase of *hauteur* on her part, and not unseldom, a sententious diatribe on the respectful deference which she considered to be her due.

Such is the weakness or meanness of the generality of people, that she found no lack of persons willing to propitiate her favour by a system of subserviency, that served to render her still more dictatorial; falsely attributing to her own acknowledged superiority, that which was but the proof of the unworthiness of her flatterers. She and her lord lived in a state of complete illusion, and this illusion constituted their happiness. They continually quoted each other's opinions as if they considered them worthy of forming a code to regulate the conduct of their acquaintance; but never were they kind enough to defer, or refer to the sentiments of any other person. If by chance some individual not versed in the peculiarities of the noble host and hostess ventured to state the *on dits* of some other magnet of the land, *they* instantly drew up to the utmost extent of their stateliness, and silenced the speaker by saying, "Lord Doncaster and I am of a totally different opinion," or "the Marchioness and I think otherwise."

These sentences were considered to be conclusive; and, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, to admit of no appeal. I was not a person

likely to propitiate the Marchioness by any undue deference to her opinions, as I had long indulged in nearly as erroneous a belief in the infallibility of my own; but the antiquity of my family, or as she was pleased to term it, my illustrious descent, aided perhaps by my large possessions, and an occasional and unamiable display of *fierté* in my manner, had won her regard.

To Lady Walsingham she was condescendingly polite; but the condescension was so ostentatiously manifested, as not unfrequently to render the politeness more disagreeable and offensive than the most studied negligence would have been.

The house bore undeniable demonstrations of the character of the owners—magnificence had banished comfort; and the very chairs seemed to have been designed with a reference to the peculiarities of the Marquis and the Marchioness; the backs being so unusually perpendicular, that the slightest approach to a reclining posture was rendered impracticable. The sofas were so far removed from the formal circle in which the chairs were placed that they were useless; and these last were so cumbrous, that to move one of them out of its accustomed station was an Herculean task. The dimensions of the furniture were of Brobdignagian proportions, totally defying any effort of ordinary strength to displace them; and I have seen the Marchioness compelled to require the assistance of two of her footmen to draw the ponderous fire screen to protect her visage from the effects of the fire.

The bed and dressing rooms appropriated to visitors, though containing all that wealth could place in them, bid defiance to comfort, even still more obviously than the saloons. No bergère or sofa on castors to admit of their being wheeled near the fire, were to be found in them. Heavy carved and gilded ones were placed formally against the walls of the vast apartments, from which it would have required the strength of half-a-dozen laqueys to have removed them. The dressing table, with its accessories in massive silver, stood in the centre; and at such a distance from the windows as to preclude a clear view in the mirror of the countenance of the person who used it. This circumstance perhaps, might account for the undue and unequal distribution of rouge that was wont to appear on the cheeks of the noble hostess; one of which was generally much more florid than the other. Probably this circumstance too might be cited in explanation of the occasional elevation of one of

her eyebrows; the black wax that imparted to them their raven hue, being not unfrequently placed *above,* instead of *on,* the brow.

The first day of our arrival, the only guests assembled to meet us were the rector of the parish, and the doctor, with their respective wives. The appearance of both these worthies might have served to convince even the most incredulous person, of the superior advantages enjoyed by him to whom was delegated the care of souls, over him to whom was intrusted the cure of bodies. The reverend doctor was a man of extraordinary obesity and rubicund countenance; while the medical doctor looked as if he had swallowed half the physic he had prescribed for others, so thin was his frame, and so palid his face. Their help-mates resembled their liege lords in a remarkable degree, Mrs. Warburton being almost as fat as the reverend doctor, while Mrs. Hollingford looked in a state of advanced atrophy.

Never had I witnessed such extreme obsequiousness as that exhibited by these four individuals to the Marquis and Marchioness of Doncaster. They assented to every observation uttered by either, generally adding, "your ladyship is always right," or "your lordship is perfectly correct." They did ample justice to the dinner which was more remarkable for its copiousness, than for the talents of the cook. The reverend doctor, united the fastidiousness of an epicure in his entreaties for the most delicate morsels, with the gluttony of the gourmand in the rapidity with which he caused their disappearance; while the M.D. positively devoured, like a famished man, determined to make the best use of his time.

"What is the news, Dr. Hollingford," demanded Lord Doncaster, when the removal of the soup and fish, allowed a few brief minutes of repose to that gentleman.

"No news, my Lord Marquis, the country never was so dull; scarcely a patient amongst the gentry. But among the poor, nothing but coughs and sore throats; the apothecary of the county dispensary declares he never furnished so much medicine before; and for my part, I do nothing but ride all over the parish, and write prescriptions."

"How very strange," said Lady Doncaster, "that while the upper classes are so well, the lower ones should be so unhealthy, notwithstanding they live in the same climate. Such a circumstance

justifies my hypothesis, that the upper class are as superior in physical as they are in mental powers to the lower orders."

"That's just what I say, your ladyship," observed Mrs. Hollingford, "the wealthy are rarely ill. Now there's Mr. Goldsworthy, the retired brewer, who is as rich as a Jew, he has now been two whole years in the parish, and never once sent for the doctor. Why it's a perfect shame! How does he think doctors are to live?"

A look of unutterable contempt from Lady Doncaster, was all the notice taken of this remark; but the reverend divine continued the subject, saying, "I don't quite know what to make of this same Mr. Goldsworthy. He has never been once to my church since he came here, which I hold to be very indecorous, and disrespectful to me."

"The two sins of omission you have both related, explains the cause of Mr. Goldsworthy's uninterrupted health," replied the Marquis of Doncaster, with a species of laugh vulgarly denominated a chuckle. "By not going into your damp church, reverend sir, he escapes cold; and by not sending for the doctor, he avoids the necessity of taking physic. Eh gentlemen, eh, eh, what do you say to that?"

"Your lordship is so very droll;" uttered one, and, "your lordship is pleased to banter," said the other.

At this moment, a portion of a glass of wine which Dr. Warburton was gulping down rather too rapidly, went wrong, and produced all the symptoms of strangulation. His rubicund face became of a dark purple hue, his eyes appeared starting from their orbits, and a convulsive noise was heard to issue from his throat. Doctor Hollingford started from his seat, drew a case of lancets from his pocket, and prepared to remove Dr. Warburton's coat for the purpose of trying the effects of phlebotomy; but Mrs. Warburton rushed to the defence of her husband, and placing herself between him and the doctor, exclaimed that he should not be bled. The *maître d'hotel,* more judicious than the doctor or the suffering man's angry wife, untied his cravat; and Mrs. Warburton, having now succeeded in sending back the mortified and disappointed Dr. Hollingford to his seat, applied her finger and thumb to the snuff box which she took from her husband's pocket, and conveyed a large pinch of the pungent powder into his nostrils.

"Have a care madam what you do," said the angry and baffled doctor, "the consequences may be attended with great danger; the already

overcharged vessels of the head may not be capable of resisting the undue excitement of sternutation, at such a moment."

This reasonable remonstrance produced no other effect on the enlightened Mrs. Warburton, than to induce her to administer a still larger pinch of snuff to the nostrils of her convulsed husband, who now, in addition to the hiccup, began sneezing repeatedly and violently, sending forth at each effort, most unseemly aspersions over the dishes. Lady Doncaster ordered the *entrées* within reach of the undesirable irrigation to be forthwith removed; and looked the very incarnation of dismay and anger at this untimely interruption of the repast. Her lord seemed more disposed to smile at than sympathize with Dr. Warburton's painful situation; who still continued to sneeze, though he, with one hand manfully resisted his wife's efforts to force on him another pinch of snuff.

Doctor Hollingford kept his eyes fixed on the reverend divine with a glance of such intense curiosity, that I was uncharitable enough to think, that he would not have been sorry, had his prediction of the danger to which Mrs. Warburton's treatment exposed the life of her husband, been verified, and thus established a proof of his prescience and skill. But he was doomed to be disappointed; for, after a quarter of an hour's suffering, Dr. Warburton was restored to his usual state of composure. But not so his wife; who, holding the snuff-box open, while the doctor struggled against her administering another pinch, his hand came in contact with the box, and sent its contents into her eyes, as she in a recumbent posture approached him. She bore not this accident patiently, but uttered piercing cries, closing her eyes tenaciously, as if to retain all the pungent powder that they had received. Dr. Hollingford again approached her to offer his advice, and again was repulsed, with less of urbanity than decorum warranted.

"Yes, yes, you want to make a job of me," exclaimed the fat lady, "I know you do, but you shall have no fee from me, I can tell you."

"For the matter of that ma'am," replied Mrs. Hollingford, "I'd have you to know that my husband, Dr. Hollingford, is not a man to think of fees, when a fellow-creature is in peril, as all the poor in the parish can vouch. But some people are so very suspicious and stingy, that it is difficult for other people to escape their censures."

"If by some people, you mean me, ma'am," answered Mrs. Warburton, still wiping her eyes, and horribly distorting her countenance, "I can assure you that—"

"Ladies, I beg," said Lady Doncaster, "that you will remember that Lady Walsingham, Lady Arabella Walsingham, Lord Doncaster, and myself can feel very little interest in your local differences, and therefore I request that you will restrain the expression of them for a more fitting occasion."

This was said with the Marchioness' most stern and dignified air, and produced the desired effect; for Mrs.Warburton "hoped her Ladyship would have the goodness to excuse her warmth;" and Mrs. Hollingford humbly "begged her Ladyship's pardon."

Peace being restored, though it was evident that the angry feelings of the ladies of the D.D. and M. D., were by no means appeased, notwithstanding that a fear of offending the noble host and hostess, induced them to subdue every external symptom of irritation, Lady Doncaster announced that, by letters received that morning from London, she was informed, that their friend Lord Westonville was shortly to lead to the hymeneal altar, the Lady Theodosia Fitz Hamilton.

"A very suitable and proper marriage," replied Lord Doncaster, "unobjectionable in every point of view."

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "Lady Theodosia is a most dignified and highbred young woman; one who has a proper consciousness of her own elevated position, and who will never permit others to forget it."

"Lady Doncaster is in this instance, as in all others, perfectly correct," observed the Marquis; "Lady Theodosia is precisely the model I should select to represent the female aristocracy of England. No weak condescension about her; no undignified desire to please."

"I am highly gratified by the match," resumed Lady Doncaster oracularly, "for, as my Lord observes, Lady Theodosia is indeed a model for all women, and a union with her must insure the happiness of Lord Westonville."

"I am strongly disposed to disbelieve the report," said I, somewhat maliciously.

"And pray why, Lady Arabella?" demanded Lady Doncaster, with her most stately air.

Lady Walsingham cast an imploring glance at me; but I could not resist adding, "simply, because I happen to know, that Lord Westonville has proposed to, and been accepted by, another, and I think more eligible person."

"But, you will excuse me, Lady Arabella, if I say, that ladies are sometimes prone to insinuate that gentlemen have proposed to them, who never entertained any such intention."

"In the present instance, there can be no mistake," replied I, "for Lord Westonville himself, talked to me of his approaching nuptials with the lady to whom I referred."

"You astonish me," answered the Marchioness, with an expression that more plainly expressed, "you enrage me."

"Yes, you really surprise me, as Lady Doncaster justly observed," said her sapient Lord; "and had you not mentioned that you heard Lord Westonville himself confirm his intention of wedding another lady, I should hardly have permitted myself to credit the assertion; for the Dowager Duchess of Willmingham, who wrote the other statement to Lady Doncaster, is extremely accurate in the intelligence she conveys."

"I hope the lady in question is of ancient descent, for I cannot bear the thought of a *mésalliance;* and I trust she possesses the same dignified manners that characterise Lady Theodosia?"

Poor Lady Walsingham blushed to her very temples; but luckily no one observed this betrayal of her keen sense of the illiberal remark of her haughty hostess.

"The lady is of high rank," answered I, "and her manners I have always considered very distinguished and agreeable. To be sure, she does condescend to please; and never fails to succeed."

"Then," retorted the hostess, angrily, "she must be, in my opinion, deficient in the dignity that ought to appertain to a high-born woman. I never could tolerate the idea of a lady of rank so far forgetting what is due to herself and sex, as to seek to obtain, by propitiation, the homage and the suffrage which her station ought to command."

"Lady Doncaster speaks my sentiments on this point," said her lord, looking pompously and half angrily; "I must say, I never could tolerate the modern system which, if it degenerates not into a vulgar familiarity, is at least too much calculated to make people forget the line of demarcation which should ever subsist between a lady of ancient and

noble lineage, and the mere pretenders to fashion; who, by the influence of wealth, force themselves into a society they are so little fitted to adorn."

"Lord Doncaster's notions on this subject are well worth attention and adoption," observed his lady wife, smiling complacently on him.

"Your ladyship and his lordship's notions on *all* subjects, must ever be worth attending to," remarked the reverend doctor; "and happy are those who have an opportunity of being edified by them."

"Happy indeed;" ejaculated Dr. Hollingford, in a tone partaking of a groan and a thanksgiving. "Why no later than yesterday, Sir Gregory Tomkinson observed to me, that affairs would never go right until the Marquis of Doncaster was at their head."

"What signifies the opinion of a city knight?" retorted Dr. Warburton, "when Sir John Haverstoke, one of the most ancient baronets in England; ay, and a man possessing a clear estate of twelve thousand pounds a year, told me last Sunday, after church, (for he makes it a point never to omit attending divine worship) that his lordship was the nobleman on whom all eyes were turned to be prime minister."

"Though the opinions of Sir John Haverstoke are certainly worth attending to, as representing those of the landed interest in the county, still those of Sir Gregory Tomkinson are not to be despised; for I have observed on more occasions than one, that he is a sensible and discriminating man."

This speech was uttered by the noble host with an affectation of humility and condescension that was highly amusing; and the approval of Sir Gregory from so high a quarter carried balm to the wound inflicted by Dr. Warburton on the feelings of the worthy M.D.

"But for my part," resumed Lord Doncaster, "nothing would be more disagreeable to me than finding myself compelled to accept office. Indeed, nothing short of a royal command would induce me to do so; for, as Lady Doncaster very properly observed, when we talked the matter over, a person of my high rank and fortune can gain no accession of dignity by holding office; and the fatigue and trouble present an insuperable objection, as I stated in a certain influential—indeed, I may say illustrious quarter, when certain propositions were more than hinted at."

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "my lord and I are placed in a position that precludes us from experiencing the temptations of ambition and I never could submit to be, as prime minister's wife, compelled to receive a heterogeneous mass of people, to whom it would be necessary to enact the gracious."

The D.D., M.D., and their respective wives, looked with increased awe and reverence at the noble host, and hostess; but fortunately, a signal from the latter led us to the drawing-room, and released us from the prosy flatteries of the toad-eating doctors, and the self-complacent replies of the gratified host.

We found our *séjour* at Doncaster Castle so irksome that we abridged it, and proceeded towards home, judging by this specimen of country houses that our own was preferable to any we might encounter.

The eccentricities of our late host and hostess furnished abundant subject for my ill-natured comments during the first day of our route homewards; notwithstanding that Lady Walsingham, with the kindness that always characterised her, interposed the shield of her good nature between their defects and the severity of my animadversions. She censured the too prevalent habit in guests of violating the rights of hospitality, by criticising those infirmities which the confidence of friendship has alone developed, and which in a less intimate intercourse would probably have never been revealed.

"But who, my dear Lady Walsingham, would offer this hospitality, did they not intend to enliven the *tædium vitæ,* by detecting the follies of their guests; the recapitulation of which, after their departure, serves as an agreeable mode of varying the monotony of a country-house existence. The guests are generally aware of this dissecting process, and repay it in kind. Now, I dare be sworn that at this moment Lord and Lady Doncaster are pitying 'that poor dear mild Lady Walsingham, (who, though, to be sure, a *leetle* dull, is nevertheless a very inoffensive good sort of a person) at being compelled to live with that flippant imperious Lady Arabella, who seems to think, forsooth, that because she comes of an ancient lineage, and is an heiress, she is superior to the rest of the world.'"

"How can you, Arabella, be so suspicious and satirical?"

"And how can you, *ma chère belle mère,* be so very unsuspicious and good natured?"

This was the mode in which Lady Walsingham's reproofs were made and received. She was, in truth, the very soul of womanly charity, ever ready to put the most favourable construction on the actions of others, and to require none for her own; for they were pure and blameless as her soul. Yet, strange to say, it was perhaps this unusual gentleness and benevolence in her that urged me to a not unfrequent practice of the contrary qualities. Her extraordinary forbearance irritated me at times; and led to my expressing opinions that were not always founded in justice. She judged the world by the fair model of human nature best known to herself, while I drew my conclusions from the unfavourable specimen of it offered in my own character. We were both wrong; but *her* error was the more amiable.

On arriving at the Marquis of Granby Inn, at Northallerton, where we were to remain for the night, we after a light repast sought our separate chambers. After having dismissed my attendant, I recollected that I had forgotten a book in the sitting-room, to which I attached a peculiar value, it having been the gift of Lord Clydesdale. Fearful of its getting into other hands, I seized a light, and was hurrying in search of it, when my foot was caught in a rent of the stair carpet, and I was falling to the ground; but was saved by being caught in the arms of a person who was ascending.

Flurried and rendered nervous by this accident, I trembled so violently that the person who had arrested my fall still supported me; fearful lest I should again be exposed to a similar danger. I turned to thank him, when—Oh! merciful Heaven!—I recognised in the stranger him who for months and years had occupied every thought, filled every dream, and was allied to every hope of my doting heart! A passionate burst of tears relieved me; and "Do I again see you, Clydesdale? Dear—always *dear* Clydesdale!" broke from my lips, as clinging to him, and subdued by the surprise and joy of seeing him, I wept on his bosom. "Cruel Clydesdale! how could you fly from me? Ah! if you knew the days of care, the nights without sleep, that I have passed since you left me!"—And here my tears and sobs precluded me from finishing the sentence.

All this scene passed on the public stair-case of a crowded inn; and that there were no witnesses of it seems nothing short of a miracle. He trembled nearly as much as I did, and bore me into the sitting room to

which I had been proceeding when we met, and the door of which stood open. When he had placed me on a chair, I fixed my eyes fondly on his face—that face which memory had so often and tenderly recalled to my mind. Its paleness and solemnity so shocked and alarmed me, that, forgetful of the pride and delicacy of my sex, and awake only to the dread of again losing him, I passionately poured forth the confession of my unchanged, my unchangeable love; the truth of which the energy of my manner and the tears that bathed my cheeks too well attested. He made many efforts to interrupt me while I spoke, but I would not be checked. The feelings so long pent up in my heart now burst forth, and could not be repressed. What, then, was my agony at discovering that his countenance became still more pale and solemn as I proceeded.

"Is it, can it be, Clydesdale," I exclaimed in deep humiliation, "that you no longer love me?"

"The position in which this fatal *rencontre* places us," replied he, and he trembled while he spoke, "compels me to avow that, welcome as would once have been the confession you have made me, dear Lady Arabella, it now comes too late; for I,—I am the husband of another."

Never shall I forget the overpowering agony of that moment! how I wished it was the last of my existence! He, even he, the traitor, seemed to feel for the misery he had inflicted, but the expression of pity on his countenance nearly maddened me.

"Leave me! leave me, for ever;" I passionately exclaimed. "You shall be obeyed;" answered he with sadness. "But do not let us part in unkindness. You have not, believe me, a truer friend."

"Leave me!" I again exclaimed, "unless you would see me driven to some act of insanity."

He slowly left the room, and I—stole to my chamber, to which my trembling limbs could scarcely bear me, like a degraded and guilty creature, whose heart was torn between the conflicting emotions of love and shame. When I reflected that I had poured into the ear of the husband of another, the mad, the immodest avowal of a passion, which I could no longer entertain, or he reciprocate, without guilt and infamy, the deepest sense of humiliation took possession of my mind. I writhed in mental torture under this degrading consciousness of my own folly; tears of agony flowed down my burning cheeks; and I dreaded to meet the light of day, deserted and despised, as I now felt myself to be.

Jealousy also added its sharp pangs to those inflicted by disappointed love and shame. He, whom alone, I ever really, truly loved, was now lavishing on another those marks of affection, which I once believed would be mine, and mine only. Nay, was perhaps, at that moment repeating to her my indelicate, my inexcusable conduct.

When had he married, and how had it occurred, that the intelligence of his nuptials had not reached my ears? It was strange; it was unaccountable!!

Never shall I forget the anguish I endured that night. Sleep deigned not to visit my pillow for even a few brief moments; and I counted the weary hours as the clock told them, wishing that each might be the last of an existence now rendered hateful to me.

I arose when day had dawned, and endeavoured, by the application of rose water, to remove from my eyes the redness occasioned by weeping. My temples throbbed with pain, and my limbs ached; yet, though severely suffering from indisposition, I could still think of guarding appearances; and before my maid had entered my chamber, I had succeeded in ameliorating, if not in effacing the symptoms of my grief, sufficiently to make the old excuse of "a severe headache" explain the cause of my altered looks.

"There has been a new married couple in the house, last night, my lady," said my *femme de chambre,* with that craving desire to communicate intelligence peculiar to her class. "The Marquis of Clydesdale and his bride. They were married yesterday morning, your ladyship; and are on their road to one of his lordship's fine country seats. The bride is a great beauty, and is daughter to the Duke of Biggleswade. I knew the lady's maid in my last place, and she told me all about it after her ladyship had gone to bed."

I dismissed Mrs. Tomlinson for a cup of strong coffee, anxious to abridge her communications, every word of which inflicted a fresh pang; and trembling lest she should prate of the love of the happy couple, which I had not yet acquired sufficient fortitude to hear of, without the risk of betraying emotions that might give rise to suspicions of the state of my heart.

How strange, and oh! how much to be regretted, was the coincidence of my finding myself in the same house with Lord Clydesdale, and on such an occasion! Yet this meeting was occasioned wholly by my own

obstinacy in resisting the entreaties of my late host and hostess to prolong my stay with them for another day. Had I yielded, how much of humiliation had I been spared! But it was fated that through life my wilfulness was to draw down its own punishment.

How was I to act towards Lady Walsingham? Should I confess my interview, with my *ci devant* lover, and the mortifying position in which I had placed myself, trusting to her affectionate sympathy for an alleviation of the misery I was enduring? I longed to give a free course to the pent tears, that were every moment struggling to start forth; and to weep on that gentle bosom which had from early youth so often supported my aching head, when pain or sorrow had assailed me.

But pride, ungovernable pride, forbade this indulgence; and dictated a line of conduct which added to my chagrin, by rendering deception, and hypocrisy absolutely necessary. Oh! the martyrdom of smiling when tears are ready to gush forth; of talking on indifferent subjects when all thoughts and feelings are concentrated on a prohibited one; or of speaking on that *one* with an assumed carelessness, to support the appearance of which, requires a self-control almost beyond the reach of woman.

Yet this was the conduct I adopted; for not even to Lady Walsingham, dearly as I knew she loved me, and implicitly as I was aware that I might confide in her, could my pride permit me to relate the truth; however soothing might be the tender sympathy, it could not fail to awaken. No! I would affect a perfect indifference on the subject of Lord Clydesdale's marriage; and whatever the effort might cost me, no human being should discover the agony I was enduring. It is thus that our own defects, and there is not a more pernicious one in its consequences than pride, adds new stings to the misfortunes that assail us. Disappointment loses half its bitterness when it is confided to some affectionate friend who listens with sympathy, and who shares if she cannot alleviate the sting. Yet of this consolation did I deprive myself, urged by that indomitable pride that had so often led me astray; and which was the severest avenger of the follies it had occasioned, by rendering me still more deeply conscious of their humiliating effects.

When I met Lady Walsingham at breakfast, no word of hers indicated her knowledge that Lord and Lady Clydesdale had sojourned beneath the same roof with us the night before; that they were in fact still

beneath it. I had risen much earlier than my accustomed hour, anxious to quit the inn before those I so much wished to avoid had left their chamber. But my evil destiny still pursued me; for, while Lady Walsingham and I stood at the window impatiently waiting to hear our travelling carriage announced, that of Lord Clydesdale drove up to the door to receive its owners. To withdraw from the window, would be to expose my secret feelings to Lady Walsingham; and therefore I stood, with the semblance of calmness, though my very heart throbbed with intense pain. She made some excuse for absenting herself from the room, and I thanked her for this delicate attention; though I feared it indicated a knowledge of my weakness that I had hoped she had not acquired. I was, consequently, left alone, and determined whatever pain the effort might cost me, to behold the wife of him, to whom *I* had hoped to have stood in that near and dear relation. I waited not long, for in a few minutes the bridegroom led forth his bride, and assisted her to ascend the carriage. There was an affectionate solicitude apparent in the performance of even this trivial action, that indicated a more than ordinary tenderness, and therefore inflicted an acute pang on my heart. There was a time when *I* was the object of similar attentions from him; attentions performed with an earnestness of affection more flattering to her who received them, than all that mere gallantry ever suggested.

The person of Lady Clydesdale was tall and graceful, and her face, of which, when she was seated in the carriage I had a full view, was one of the most beautiful I had ever beheld. Its surpassing loveliness too well explained why mine was forgotten; and as I gazed on it for the few minutes that intervened ere the servants were ready to start, I fancied that I might have better borne his marriage had the object of his selection been less beautiful. Yet perhaps it was well for me that her loveliness had made such a forcible impression on my mind; for from the moment I had beheld her, I never could think of him without associating her image with his. Hence, by slow degrees I learned to repress the painful recollection of my unhappy disclosure; but not until many a bitter thought and sleepless night had expiated my folly.

Lady Walsingham never recurred to the subject; and I, though anxious to display my affected indifference by conversing on it with *nonchalance,* had not resolution sufficient to name it. Her affectionate attentions to me seemed to increase daily, and strange to say, not

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Lady Clydesdale

unfrequently occasioned me more of pain than pleasure, as I fancied they originated in the pity excited by the contrast of our respective prospects.

On arriving at Walsingham Castle, the neighbouring nobility and gentry again flocked to visit me. Among them was one, whom at my former *séjour* in the country I had not seen, though his name was frequently mentioned. Lord Wyndermere was then on the continent; and was represented to me as a man of great personal attractions and accomplishments, with a highly cultivated mind. His father had been so extravagant as to leave his estate heavily incumbered at his death; and his successor's income was represented as being totally inadequate to the support of his rank and station.

As a boy, Lord Wyndermere had been much beloved in the neighbourhood, and was now always spoken of with respect and regard. He had only lately returned to Wyndermere Abbey, a fine old seat about twenty miles distant from mine, where he was residing with a very limited establishment; but his society was universally sought and appreciated in the circle in which I lived.

We soon met; and I found that report had not exaggerated his merits. A thoughtfulness of manner amounting almost to pensiveness, distinguished him from the common herd of young men, whose frivolity and gaiety never appeared to greater disadvantage than when contrasted with his mild seriousness. This gravity, so unusual at his age, was generally attributed to the straitened circumstances in which he found himself placed; and it served to increase the interest he excited. His poverty, and the dignified equanimity with which it was borne, was a passport to my favour; which was the more readily yielded to him, from his making no effort to acquire it.

He was polite to all; but there was a reserve in his very politeness that precluded familiarity; and to me, he was less attentive—though always scrupulously well bred—than to any other of the ladies who formed our society. I am fully persuaded, that had Lord Wyndermere possessed affluence, he would have only created a commonplace sentiment of good will in my mind: but his high birth and scanty means awakened a thousand of those romantic and commiserating thoughts and feelings peculiar to women, which generally terminate in the creation of a warm interest in their minds at least, if not in their hearts.

I often detected him gazing on me, and observed, that on such occasions, he seemed embarrassed, and avoided looking at me again for some time. Though I was ready to admit the superiority of Lord Wyndermere over most part of the men of my acquaintance, I nevertheless considered him immeasurably inferior to Lord Clydesdale; and the consciousness of this inferiority, which never forsook me, precluded me from entertaining any warmer sentiments towards him, than esteem and pity. Notwithstanding my indifference, after a month or two had elapsed, during which period we frequently met, I began to be piqued as well as surprised, at discovering that he was more assiduous to any or every woman of our circle than to myself. His attentions to them, however, never exceeded that polite gallantry so universally adopted by all gentlemen at that period; still, to me, he was more cold, more ceremonious, and avoided, rather than sought occasions for conversing with me. Yet when I have been talking to others I have remarked, with a truly feminine vigilance, that he invariably ceased speaking, and listened with a deep interest. This inconsistency of behaviour aroused a certain degree of curiosity in my mind; and that woman is in danger in whom this sentiment is awakened. Pity and curiosity are said to be exclusive attributes of the female character; the first I do believe to be a distinctive feature; but the second, and less amiable quality, appertains equally to both sexes. I will leave to casuists to determine which of the two sexes are the more entirely influenced by it, while I acknowledge that I was governed by both at this epoch; even though the wound inflicted on my peace by the late death-blow to its long cherished hopes, still bled and rankled.

Lord Westonville now came to claim his bride, and for the first time of my life, I found myself *de trop,* though in my own house. His brief separation from the object of his affection served to increase his passion for her. He had eyes only for her, was never happy when she was not present; and notwithstanding his good breeding, it was obvious, that the presence of a third person was by no means agreeable to him. He was anxious that the honey moon should be passed *tête-à-tête*; but how was this natural wish to be accomplished without leaving me unprotected? an indecorum not to be tolerated in the good old times of etiquette and propriety to which I refer.

I quickly discovered, by various nameless trifles, all that was passing in the mind of my stepmother's future husband; and the discovery awakened serious reflections in my breast. If I thus felt the annoyance of being *de trop* in my own house, how much more unbearable would it become when I found myself in his; and yet to dwell without a *chaperon* was impossible. The few female relatives who might have filled this onerous office towards me, were all too personally disagreeable to me, to admit of my submitting to their society.

What therefore was I to do, or where bestow my person for even a few weeks, while *ma belle mère* was enacting the part of bride? I was positively humiliated, as all these puerile annoyances presented themselves to my imagination: my dependent position galled my vanity, and led to some sober reflections on the advantages of a wedded life, which precluded the necessity of *chaperons.* Sincere and warm as was my attachment to Lady Walsingham, I could not at all tolerate the idea of forming a *tiers* in her future domestic circle, with the consciousness that my presence would be an irksome restraint on her lord. Then to find myself always a secondary object, a continual witness to the homages offered to another. No! it was not to be borne; and I almost "wished that heaven had made me such a man." Yet not exactly quite such a man; but in short some *convenable parti,* whose presence would relieve me from all necessity of *chaperons*; and whose devoted attentions would convince me, that I too might be worshipped in my own temple.

While making these reflections, shall I confess that the handsome but serious face of Lord Wyndermere more than once occurred to my mind. *He* would not have been an unsuitable husband; for though poor, he, it was quite evident, was no fortune hunter; and his family was as ancient and noble as my own. It would have been very desirable also, to prove to those in general, who might suspect my former attachment to Lord Clydesdale, and to that individual himself in particular, that it never could have been of a serious character, by my so speedily following his example in marrying. But it was useless for *me* to think of this subject, as it was quite obvious Lord Wyndermere had never bestowed a thought upon it. Nevertheless, I *did* think of it occasionally, and especially when the sighs and whispers of the doting Lord Westonville reminded me that my presence interrupted the impassioned eloquence of his conversation to his future bride.

One of the nearest of my neighbours was a very handsome widow, a Mrs. Temple Clarendon, remarkable for the fascination of her manners, and the exemplary propriety of her conduct. Left a widow at twenty-two, with an enormous jointure, the whole of which was to be forfeited in case of her contracting a second marriage, she, now in the fourth year of her widowhood, appeared to have renounced all thoughts of matrimony, and was but lately returned from the Continent, where she had spent three years. I quickly formed an intimacy with this lady: congenial tastes and habits cemented it into friendship, and I considered it as peculiarly fortunate, when, having confided to her my embarrassment with regard to accompanying *ma belle mère* on her honeymoon expedition, she obviated the difficulty by kindly and warmly soliciting me to take up my abode with her during the absence of the future Lady Westonville.

I yielded a ready assent—Lord Westonville looked as if he thought the plan an admirable one, though he feebly uttered something about regretting the loss of my society; and Lady Walsingham, though really loth to be separated from me, acceded to a project that seemed to afford me so much satisfaction.

The nuptials took place a few days after. The same number of white favours, and the same quantity of bride-cake, were distributed, as is customary on such occasions; the same splendid *déjeuner* was partaken of, and the quantum of tears shed. When this established portion of the performance had been exhibited, the whole was orthodoxly concluded by a new and tasteful equipage, with postillions and outriders decked with wedding favours, whirling the bride and bridegroom from the door.

I could not see her, who had been my kind and attached companion for so many years, depart without deep regret. It brought back to me the recollection of the days of my youth, and of that fond father who was in the grave. But Mrs. Temple Clarendon, who was present, soon cheered me by her attentions; and, by the time we had reached her dwelling, my spirits were restored to their wonted tone.

The next day, we dined at a neighbouring nobleman's, and there we met Lord Wyndermere, and, to my no slight annoyance, Sir Augustus Fauconberg, the friend of Lord Clydesdale; he whose disclosure of the motive of his friend's absence on the anniversary of the death of his first love, had led to our separation. He was associated in my mind with one

of the most painful events of my life, an event which he, in a great measure, caused; and, therefore, I disliked him. To this objection to meeting him again was added the fear that he might disclose my former engagement to Lord Clydesdale; every reference to which I detested ever since he had become the husband of another. I soon found that Mrs. Temple Clarendon was an old acquaintance of his; Lord Wyndermere also had met him on the Continent; and I felt anything but gratified when I heard her engage both gentlemen to meet a party at her house the ensuing day.

During the evening I accompanied the Ladies Percival, the daughters of our host, into a conservatory that communicated with the suite of drawing-rooms, and into which the windows of several of them opened. While admiring some rare plants on the pyramidal stand, which completely concealed me from those in the drawing-room, I heard Sir Augustus Fauconberg observe to Lord Wyndermere, that I seemed to have quite surmounted my attachment for Lord Clydesdale. Curiosity rivetted me to the spot; and, luckily, my companions were too far distant to hear what was passing.

"Is it possible that Lady Arabella Walsingham ever could have loved in vain?" exclaimed Lord Wyndermere.

"Why, not exactly that," replied Fauconberg, and I hated him from that moment, "Clydesdale was very much in love with her, and they were on the point of being married; that is, they were affianced, and all that sort of thing. But she took it into her imperious little head, (and I can assure you a devilish proud head it is), that because he had once loved before, and still retained a mournful recollection of her he had loved, she, forsooth, was ill-used; and so, (can you believe such folly?) she wrote a haughty letter to poor Clydesdale, commanding him to see her no more. You have no idea how long and severely he suffered from this capricious conduct of hers; for he was really attached to her, and she too, I fancy, liked him extremely."

What were my feelings at hearing this!

"How any man that Lady Arabella had once honoured with her preference could think of, much less bestow his hand on another, appears to me almost incredible; for she is a woman that once seen, can never be forgotten," said Lord Wyndermere.

"Hang me, if you are not a little smitten yourself," replied Fauconberg. "Why not endeavour to render the sentiment reciprocal? With her vast fortune, and your encumbered one, it would be the very wisest plan in the world."

I was all ear, and listened with intense anxiety to this discourse.

"It is precisely because she *has* a vast fortune, and I an encumbered one, that I must never think of her. I am too proud to become a suitor to the *heiress,* though I could worship the woman, and——"

Here the Ladies Percival approached; and, fearful that they might discover that I had been an eaves-dropper, I quietly joined them, and sauntered towards another part of the conservatory.

This overheard conversation made a deep impression on me. Now was the reserve of Lord Wyndermere explained, and explained in a manner most flattering to my vanity, and creditable to his feelings. What pride and delicacy did his sentiments evince! Handsome and agreeable as I had hitherto considered him, he was now invested with fresh attractions in my mind; and I felt elated at the conquest I had achieved. Yes, *his* was indeed a heart worth captivating; *he* could not even *imagine* that I could love in vain, nor believe that a person once preferred by me could ever think of another.

These two concise and simple sentences contained a compliment more gratifying to my *amour propre,* than all the eulogiums that ever had been poured into my ear; and what woman forgets, or remains indifferent to the man, who considers her irresistible?

Anxious to disprove the assertion of my former attachment to Lord Clydesdale, I now assumed a more than ordinary gaiety. I referred with an air of perfect indifference to past scenes in Italy; had even resolution enough to name Lord Clydesdale, and spoke of his marriage, as if he had never stood in any other relation to me than a mere common acquaintance. I stole a glance at Lord Wyndermere, to observe what effect this seeming indifference had on him; and was gratified by remarking that his countenance betrayed a more than usual expression of satisfaction.

From this evening, I found myself continually in the society of my new admirer. Invited to the same houses, we were drawn together without either of us having the air of seeking any intercourse. By degrees, his reserve wore away, and his looks and manner assumed more

of softness and tenderness towards me. Still, no word of love was breathed; and I, to say the truth, began to fear his objections to an heiress were indeed insurmountable. It was not that I loved, or even fancied that I loved him; for the depth and force of my former unhappy attachment had been such as to convince me I should never love again. But the peculiarity of my position, and my dislike to finding myself *en tiers* with Lord and Lady Westonville, led me to think with complacency of avoiding such a dilemma by rewarding the romantic and disinterested affection of Lord Wyndermere with my hand and fortune.

Affairs stood in this position, when the absence of the new married couple, which, from the arranged four weeks of its duration, had grown into twice that length of time, was drawing to a close: and I was thinking, with no pleasurable feelings, of enacting the part of witness to their connubial felicity, when Mrs. Temple Clarendon asked me whether I had observed how much smitten with me poor Lord Wyndermere was. I affected to doubt the truth of the statement; and remarked that a man in love was not likely to be so reserved and distant with the object of it.

This led to an animated declaration on her part that *she* had been aware of his violent and hopeless passion from its commencement, which dated from the day he beheld me for the first time. She eloquently painted his despair at feeling an attachment which, from the difference in our fortunes, must be a hopeless one; but which, nevertheless, would terminate but with his existence. His pride and delicacy opposed obstacles to his avowal of his feelings, which a belief that they were not repugnant to me could alone overcome; and she entreated, nay, implored that I would authorise her, who was the sincere and disinterested friend of both Lord Wyndermere and myself, to give him to understand that he was not disagreeable to me. The warmth and earnestness of her pleading won on me; and, aided by the insidious foe within my breast, vanity, led me to believe all that she asserted. She particularly dwelt on the circumstance of Lord Wyndermere's having hitherto never felt the influence of the tender passion, a circumstance, above all others, the most calculated to gratify my fastidious and jealously disposed mind; and, as memory reverted to the pangs I had formerly endured from the knowledge of my former suitor's prior attachment, I reflected with complacency that in the present instance no such painful reminiscences, could ever wound me. I should be the only

idol ever worshipped in the shrine of his heart,—that heart which proved its delicacy and refinement by having so long resisted all the blandishments of female attractions, reserving itself for me,—and me alone!

The consequence of these reflections was, that I suffered Mrs. Temple Clarendon to whisper hope to her friend; and, in a few minutes after he was at my feet. But, though he breathed vows, whose fervour were well calculated to establish in my mind the conviction of his love, he left me in doubt whether his pride did not still oppose an insuperable barrier to our union. He described the humiliating position of a man dependent on a wife, and always subject to the mortifying, the degrading suspicion, of having been influenced to marry her by mercenary motives. So eloquently and feelingly did he speak on this subject, that it required no inconsiderable encouragement on my part to reconcile him to the idea; for, won by the passionate ardour of his manner, I was, or fancied myself, touched by something approaching to a sympathy with his sentiments.

In short, when Mrs. Temple Clarendon joined the conference, and urged that, although an heiress, my attractions were too prominent to admit a doubt of *their* being the whole and sole charm in a lover's eyes, Lord Wyndermere's scruples were vanquished; and I consented to receive him as my accepted suitor. *He* was all gratitude and rapture; and *I* indulged in that self-complacency peculiar to vain people, when their *amour propre* has been gratified, and their pride flattered by conferring an obligation.

I returned to Walsingham Castle in time to receive Lord and Lady Westonville; who, all smiles and happiness, offered a perfect picture of conjugal felicity. Never had two months produced a more complete metamorphosis on any human being, than in *ma belle mère.* The object of unceasing attention and doting love, her presence conferring delight on her husband, and her slightest wish a law, she had acquired a cheerfulness and self confidence that lent her new charms, without having lost any of that winning gentleness which had always characterised her.

When, during the very first evening of our meeting, I observed the all-engrossing attention she excited, and the evident *gêne* and constraint my presence imposed on her husband, I inwardly rejoiced that in a short time her *chaperonage* would no longer be required. She also, sincerely as

she was attached to me, had, during our separation, learned too well, to appreciate the comforts of a home where she alone was worshipped, not to experience a restraint at the prospect of becoming a permanent guest in mine.

This state of their feelings, though both of them endeavoured to conceal it, was thoroughly visible to my keen perception; and I anticipated the satisfaction with which they would hail their freedom from the wearying thraldom of *chaperonage*. I was not disappointed. They listened to my avowal of my engagement with evident pleasure, approved my choice; and we all three appeared to become more attached to each other, in the anticipation of our mutual release.

The next day brought Mrs. Temple Clarendon, intent on the momentous business of marriage settlements. She had many suggestions to offer, all based on the absolute necessity of taking measures to avoid wounding the pride and delicacy of Lord Wyndermere's sentiments. His poverty, she said, rendered him so susceptible, that *I* must place him in a state of perfect independence; and that, without consultation or reference to him. I was as ready to act on this suggestion as she was to offer it; but I had only a life interest in my estates, they being strictly entailed on any children I might have. The personal property I was at liberty to bequeath; and I determined on placing it at his disposal. My guardians offered many objections to this scheme, but I was resolute; and the more so, from observing the perfect disinterestedness of my future husband. To be sure, had he even been disposed to study his own interest, he never could have more effectually taken care of it than by trusting to our mutual friend, Mrs. Temple Clarendon; who was indefatigable in her exertions and counsel on this subject.

In due time, the law's delays having been abridged of half their tediousness, by the persevering endeavours of Mrs. Temple Clarendon, I was led to the hymeneal altar, nothing loth; but with no warmer sentiment towards him on whom I bestowed my hand and fortune, than an admiration of his personal attractions and a sense of gratitude for his devoted attachment.

Months rolled on, his attention to me unremitting, and my affection to him daily increasing, awakened into life by the constant and impassioned demonstrations of his. I was now in that state in which ladies are said to "wish to be who love their lords;" and I looked forward

with feelings of new delight to the prospect of becoming a mother: when, one day, Lord Wyndermere, in returning from his accustomed ride, was thrown from his horse, brought home senseless, and expired in a few hours.

I will not dwell on the affliction into which this sad event plunged me. For many weeks my life was in imminent danger: and the hope of maternity deserted me, now when such a blessing alone could have consoled me for the bereavement I had sustained.

Those who have lost a husband, ere he had ceased to be a lover, ere a frown had ever curved his brow, or a harsh word escaped his lips, can alone imagine the grief and desolation of my heart at this calamity. The very circumstance of my belief in the passionate fervour of his love, and the consciousness that mine was of a much less warm character, being in fact only an affectionate friendship founded on a grateful sense of his devotion to me, added to the poignancy of my regret. I reproached myself for having previously to my acquaintance with him, exhausted the energies of my heart in an attachment to another, while he had reserved all the warmth of his for me. The soothing attentions of Lady Westonville, who, with her lord, had flown to me the moment that intelligence of my bereavement had reached her, were ineffectually used to console me. I encouraged rather than attempted to subdue my grief; for an oblivion of it appeared to me nothing short of an insult to the memory of the dead. How I wished to have Mrs. Temple Clarendon with me; she, who so highly esteemed the dear departed, could better sympathize with my regret than Lady Westonville, who had seen too little of him to be aware of his merits. But unfortunately, Mrs. Temple Clarendon was absent from England; having made an excursion to the south of France two months before for the benefit of her health, which had lately been in a declining state.

I used to take a melancholy pleasure, when again able to leave my chamber, in sitting for hours in the dressing room of my lost husband, in which I had ordered every thing appertaining to his toilette and wardrobe to be left as when he inhabited it. The books he had preserved and marked, the unfinished letters on his table were now become dear and precious mementos of him in my eyes. Why was I so unfortunate as to be deprived of this consolation, melancholy though it was? and why did my evil stars conduct me to a discovery that banished all soft regrets,

and rendered me for the rest of my existence, cold, suspicious, and unloving?

In an unlucky hour, my heart still filled with fond remembrances of my husband, it occurred to me to open his escritoire, the key of which hung to the chain of his watch, which now always rested on my table as a sacred relic. Its drawers contained only a few letters of little interest from friends; and the billets I had written to him during the epoch that intervened from my acceptance of him to our marriage. I bedewed them with my tears, as I marked how carefully he had arranged and treasured them; and my regret was renewed by this little proof of affection. In replacing them a burst of weeping led me to incline my head on both arms on the desk part of the escritoire; and in the action, I involuntarily pressed a secret spring, which flew open, and discovered a cavity in which were many letters and a large gold medallion.

An indescribable presentiment of evil seized me at the sight; and I almost determined on closing the escritoire, and never to examine the contents of the secret cavity. Would that I had persevered in this resolution! but curiosity, or a stronger motive prevailed, and I opened the medallion.

Never shall I forget the feeling of that moment, when the portrait of Mrs. Temple Clarendon, a most striking resemblance, met my astonished gaze. No doubt of the relation in which the original of the picture stood to him, to whom such a gift was made, could exist; for a long lock of hair, and an Italian inscription of the warmest nature but too clearly explained it.

The medallion fell from my trembling hands, and my eyes involuntarily closed as if to shut out the sight that had thrust daggers to my heart. I shook with the violence of my emotions, as my tortured brain recalled a thousand circumstances, received by me as proofs of an honorable friendship between my husband and Mrs. Temple Clarendon, but to which the portrait and its indelicate inscription now lent a totally different colouring.

So then, I was their dupe! their weak and credulous dupe! and all my fond dreams of love and friendship were destroyed for ever! Anger, violent and powerless anger, arose like a whirlwind in my breast, blighting and searing every soft and womanly feeling, and replacing the tender sorrow that so lately usurped my thought, by a jealous and

impotent rage, that would have fain called up the dead from his everlasting sleep, to wreak on him some mighty vengeance.

Burning tears of passion chaced the soft ones of grief from my eyes. I vowed to punish the false and vicious woman whose dupe I had been, by a public exposure of her shame; and I was almost tempted to imprecate curses on the memory of him, whose death I had so lately mourned with anguish. The perusal of the letters nearly maddened me, for the whole nefarious plot was revealed in them. Lord Wyndermere had long been the lover of Mrs. Temple Clarendon; but as the unhallowed *liaison* had taken place on the Continent, and appearances were strictly guarded between them, it had never been talked of in *England.* When it first occurred, it was his intention to have married her, and with her large fortune repair his decayed one; but on discovering the clause by which, in case of her forming a second matrimonial alliance, she was to forfeit her wealth, he abandoned all thought of adopting this course; especially as she was as little desirous as himself to forge chains that would reduce her from splendour, to comparative indigence. She knew my wealth, had heard of the weakness and vanity of my character, and as their passion was no longer in its first wild heyday they agreed to return to England and concoct a plan to catch the heiress. How well they had succeeded, my marriage, and the lavish generosity I displayed towards my *disinterested* husband, has proved. Oh! how I loathed them, and despised myself, as with burning cheeks, throbbing temples, and tortured heart, I perused the details of their artifice and guilt.

"I give you great credit," wrote this shameless woman, "for your ready tact in taking advantage of Lady Arabella's approach in the conservatory, when you were conversing with Mr. Fauconberg. The few sentences you uttered on that occasion, will lay the foundation of the superstructure I mean to erect. Such are her vanity and folly, that it only requires a tenth part of the address we possess, to secure her, and her fortune. You must enact the silent, despairing, but adoring lover, for a short time, and success will inevitably crown our efforts. After all she is handsome, and not a greater fool than nine-tenths of the girls of her age; therefore, you are not so much to be pitied as you would fain have me believe. With regard to pecuniary matters, leave the arrangement of all them to me; *I* can suggest what it would appear mercenary and indelicate in *you* to propose. Your *rôle* is, to affect a most romantic love, and a *fierté* with

regard to fortune, that will, aided by my advice, compel her to display a lavish generosity."

Each, and all, of the letters, contained similar proofs of dissimulation, and wickedness. The correspondence, subsequently to my ill-fated marriage, was carried on between the guilty pair with even an increased warmth, leaving no doubt of their continued criminality; for the last letter received from this atrocious hypocrite, stated, that he was wrong to blame her for going abroad, as, had she longer remained in England, her increasing shape must have excited suspicions destructive to that reputation which she had hitherto so successfully preserved free from taint.

For many months, the rage and indignation to which I was a constant prey, sensibly impaired my health; and change of air and scene having been prescribed for me, I left England, attended by a numerous suite, and passed many years in visiting Germany, Italy, and Sicily. My invincible dislike to encountering Mrs. Temple Clarendon, prevented me from returning to Walsingham Castle; for, although I had long abandoned all thoughts of making her conduct known, I felt that I could not meet her without betraying my contempt and dislike.

I kept up a constant correspondence with Lady Westonville, who became the mother of a large family, all of whom she lived long enough to see happily established: and when, after twenty years' absence from my native land, I returned to its shores, I experienced from her the same affectionate friendship that had ever characterised her conduct to me.

The death of Mrs. Temple Clarendon removed my principal objection to returning to Walsingham Castle. She died, as she had lived, maintaining, until the last, a hypocritical decorum, that served to conceal her vices. She bequeathed a considerable fortune to a young French lady, whom she had, some twenty years before, adopted; and whom she represented as the orphan daughter of a dear friend in the South of France; but whose remarkable resemblance to Lord Wyndermere and herself, left no doubt, on my mind at least, of the relation in which she had stood to her.

Never shall I forget the feelings I experienced when, after an absence of above twenty years, I returned to Walsingham Castle; no longer the young and blooming creature that had left it, but the staid, sober, and

faded woman of forty-five; retaining, alas! many of the faults of my youth, but none of its elasticity of spirits or hopes.

I had not passed so many years of my life without receiving several matrimonial overtures, but they had all been imperiously rejected; for the deceptive conduct of Lord Wyndermere had rendered me too suspicious, ever again to expose myself to the chance of similar treatment.

And yet my heart still yearned for something to love; some object to lean upon in my descent to old age, that period in which woman most needs the support of affection. But if, in the bloom of youth and beauty, I had been sought only for my fortune, how could I hope, as these advantages were fast disappearing, that I could ever inspire the sentiment so essential to happiness? Each year, as its flight stole away some personal attraction, rendered me still more suspicious of the professions of regard made to me; hence, I closed my heart to any new attachment, though that heart pined for the blessing of sympathy and affection.

It was a lovely summer's evening when I arrived at Walsingham Castle. A crowd of aged domestics and retainers pressed forward, to welcome me; and the whole scene so exactly resembled that which was presented to me when, nearly a quarter of a century before, I first visited the lovely spot, that I could almost fancy not more than a year had elapsed since I last beheld it. The beauty of the scene, and the joy of those who welcomed me, encouraged the illusion. My heart felt lighter than for long years it had been wont to do; my step became more elastic, as I again paced the halls of my paternal mansion, and as I gazed on the well-known objects around, now tinged by the glowing and golden beams of the setting sun, some portion of my youth and its hopes seemed restored to me.

I ascended to my chamber with nimbler feet than I had long known; and threw myself into a bergère, delighted to find myself again in my ancestral home. The hangings, the tasteful and elegant furniture, and ornaments of my luxurious suite of apartments, had been kept carefully covered; and now looked as well as in their pristine freshness. All appeared so exactly as I had left it, that I was tempted to doubt the possibility that four-and-twenty years had indeed elapsed since I had last beheld it.

I removed my bonnet and cloak; and approached the mirror to arrange my cap, *that* mirror in which I had so often, with pride and pleasure, contemplated my own image,—an image which was still vividly fresh in my recollection. But when my eyes fell on the one it now reflected, I drew back affrighted, and all the consciousness of my altered face for the first time seemed suddenly to burst upon me. Tears fell from my eyes—yes, weak and foolish as it now appears to me, I wept for my departed youth; and for that beauty of which the faithful mirror too plainly assured me, no remnant existed.

Accustomed to see my face daily, the ravages that time had made on it had never before struck me as now. My feelings had grown cold, as my visage assumed the wrinkles of age; and hitherto I had scarcely marked the melancholy change in my aspect; or if I had remarked, it occasioned me little regret. But *now*, when all around me looking fresh and unchanged as when first beheld, brought back the past vividly before me, renewing for a few brief moments the joyfulness of youth, I had been insensibly beguiled into expecting to see in the mirror, the same bright face it had formerly reflected. These were the feelings that made the sad alteration in my personal aspect appal me; and I wondered how it had hitherto caused me so little regret.

It was long ere I could conquer my repugnance to look in that glass again; but vanity which had driven me in disgust away, again led me to consult it. It whispered that the greater the change in my face, the greater was the necessity for concealing or ameliorating its defects by a studious attention to dress. Consequently I now devoted a more than ordinary time to the duties of the toilette; and in the course of a few months learned to think, that with the aid of a little art judiciously applied, I was still what might be called a fine woman.

A short time afterwards Lady Percival came to see me: and pressed me to dine at her house.

"You will meet an old acquaintance," said she, "for Lord Clydesdale is staying with us."

"Is he alone?" asked I, in trepidation, my foolish heart beating with a quicker pulsation.

"Yes," replied Lady Percival, "quite alone; ever since he lost poor dear Lady Clydesdale, he comes to us every year to spend a week or two."

"What, is Lady Clydesdale dead?" demanded I, in an agitation that I thought I should never again experience.

"Is it possible that you did not know it?" answered she calmly. "Why, she has been dead these five years; and his only child, a daughter, has been married above a year to the Duke of Warrenborough. Poor dear Lady Clydesdale was a charming person; do you know, my dear friend, that many people considered her to bear a striking likeness to you. It is very sad and solitary for him to be compelled to live alone; for though no longer young, he is still a very agreeable person."

How many thoughts and hopes did this communication awaken! He, the only man I had ever really loved, was again free; and a thousand tender recollections of our former attachment floated through my mind, as I reflected on his solitary life so resembling my own. Yes, we might meet, might again feel some portion of that affection which once filled our hearts; and, though in youth, we had been separated, we might now form a union that would enable us to pass our old age together, released from the lonely, cheerless solitude in which we both were placed.

Lady Percival observing that I had not accepted her invitation, renewed it, adding, "Do pray come, dear Lady Wyndermere! Lord Clydesdale will be so disappointed if you do not; I told him I intended to ask you, and he said he should be very glad indeed to see you again."

This sentence decided my acceptance of her invitation, for it encouraged the fond hopes that were awakened in my breast; and a thousand visions of happy days, past and to come, floated in my imagination.

From the moment that Lady Percival left me, until the hour, three days after, that saw me drive up to her door, I thought of nothing, dreamt of nothing, but my interview with Lord Clydesdale. How would he look, how address me, would he betray any agitation? were questions continually occurring to me.

Never had I taken more pains with my dress than on that momentous day. One robe was found to be too grave; and another was thrown aside as not suiting my complexion, half-a-dozen caps and as many turbans were tried, before the one deemed the most becoming was determined on; and I experienced no little portion of embarrassment, when I observed the astonishment of my *femme de chambre,* at this my unusual fastidiousness with regard to my toilette. At length, it was completed and

casting many a lingering glance at my mirror, I flattered myself that few, if any, women of my age could have looked better. If mine was no longer a figure or face to captivate the young and unthinking, it might satisfy the less scrupulous taste of the elderly and reflecting. But above all, *he* who had seen the temple in its pristine beauty, would not despise it now, though desecrated and ravaged by the hand of time.

As I reflected on the change wrought on my person by time, that foe to beauty, the thought of how the destroyer's touch might have operated on *his* occurred to me. Was *he very much* altered? But no! age might have taken from the graceful elasticity of his step, added some of her furrows to his brow, and tinged his dark locks with its silvery hue, but it could not have destroyed the noble and distinguished character of his manly beauty!

How my heart throbbed as I entered the library of Lord Percival! I positively felt as if not more than twenty summers had flown over my head; and dreaded, yet wished to see Lord Clydesdale. After the usual salutations had passed, Lady Percival led me to a large easy chair; reclined in which, with one foot enveloped in a fleecy stocking, and a velvet shoe that looked large enough for an inhabitant of Brobdignag, was an old man with a rubicund face, a head, the summit of which was bald and shining, graced by a few straggling locks of snowy white.

"This, dear Lady Wyndermere, is your old acquaintance Lord Clydesdale," whispered Lady Percival.

I positively shrank back astonished and incredulous.

"Ah! I see you do not recognize me," said the venerable-looking old gentleman before me, holding forth a hand, on each of the fingers of which were unseemly protuberances, ycleped chalk stones. "I am such a martyr to the gout, that I am unable to rise to receive you, but it affords me great pleasure to see your ladyship in such good health."

I could scarcely collect myself sufficiently to make a suitable reply. All the air-built visions my fancy had formed for the last few days were dashed to the earth, as I contemplated the infirm septagenarian before me, and remembered that he was only some ten or twelve years my senior; a circumstance which never occurred to me as disadvantageous before. Not a trace of his former personal attractions remained; nay, it would be difficult to believe, judging from his present appearance, that any had ever existed. It gave me, however, some satisfaction, to observe

that he seemed surprised at my having preserved so much of my former comeliness; and I will own, that I was malicious enough, as Lord Percival led me to the dining room, to which Lord Clydesdale was slowly limping, supported by his *valet de chambre* and a crutch, to affect a much more than ordinary quickness of pace and agility.

"And this," thought I, "is the man who has caused me so many sighs, who has inflicted on me days of care, and nights without sleep."

The thing seemed really preposterous, and I could have smiled at my own illusions; illusions that might have been indulged even to my last hour, had not one glance at their object dispelled them for ever.

I took a spiteful pleasure in recounting during dinner, the long walks I affected to be in the daily habit of taking; and attempted to avenge myself on the unconscious object of my resentment, for all the pain he had ever inflicted by now making him feel the disparity between us. I caught his eye more than once fixed on my face; and fancied that its expression indicated more of surprise or envy, than of tender reminiscences. Perhaps it was to punish me that he talked with evident pleasure of the delights of being a grandpapa; the new interest it excited when all others had nearly ceased, and the refuge it afforded against that dreary and loveless solitude to which childless old age was exposed.

This was the last day of my illusions; or of my being enabled to enact the youthful.

To diminish the ungraceful expansion of my figure, I had discarded two under draperies, in the shape of quilted silk petticoats. This unprudent piece of coquetry exposed me to a severe cold; from the effects of which I never entirely recovered: and I now suffer from a weakness of the limbs, that nearly precludes my moving without assistance. The "childless, loveless" solitude to which, alas! I find myself condemned, frequently reminds me of Lord Clydesdale's remarks on such a fate: and I am forced to admit that time would pass more happily in caressing a race of dear chubby grandchildren, than in the vain task of correcting the disagreeable personal habits of my poor *Dame de Compagnie*. Ay, or than even in committing these Confessions to paper, in the as vain hope of being amused, or of amusing; in which last disappointment I fear that my readers will only have too much reason to sympathize with me.